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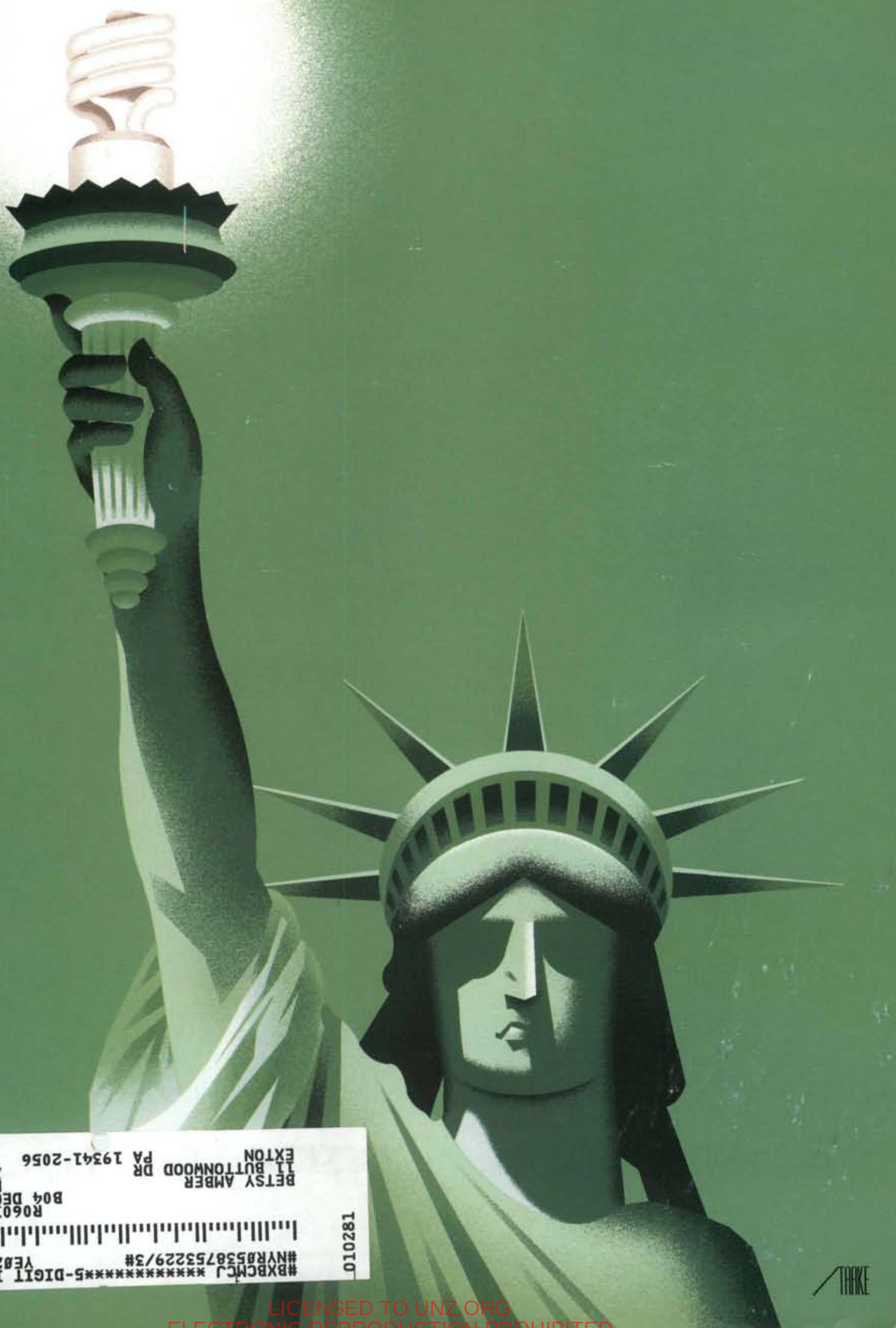
JULY 2, 2007



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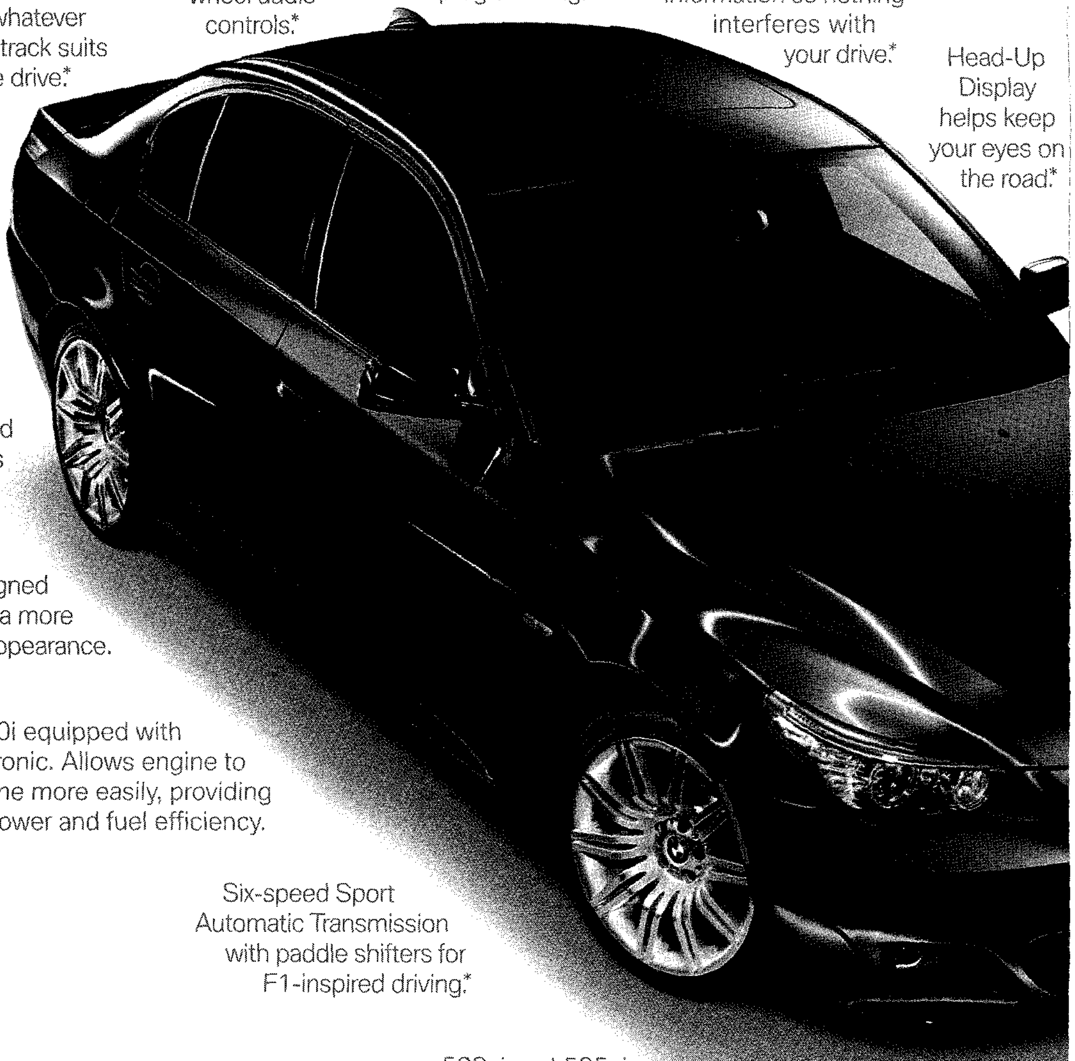

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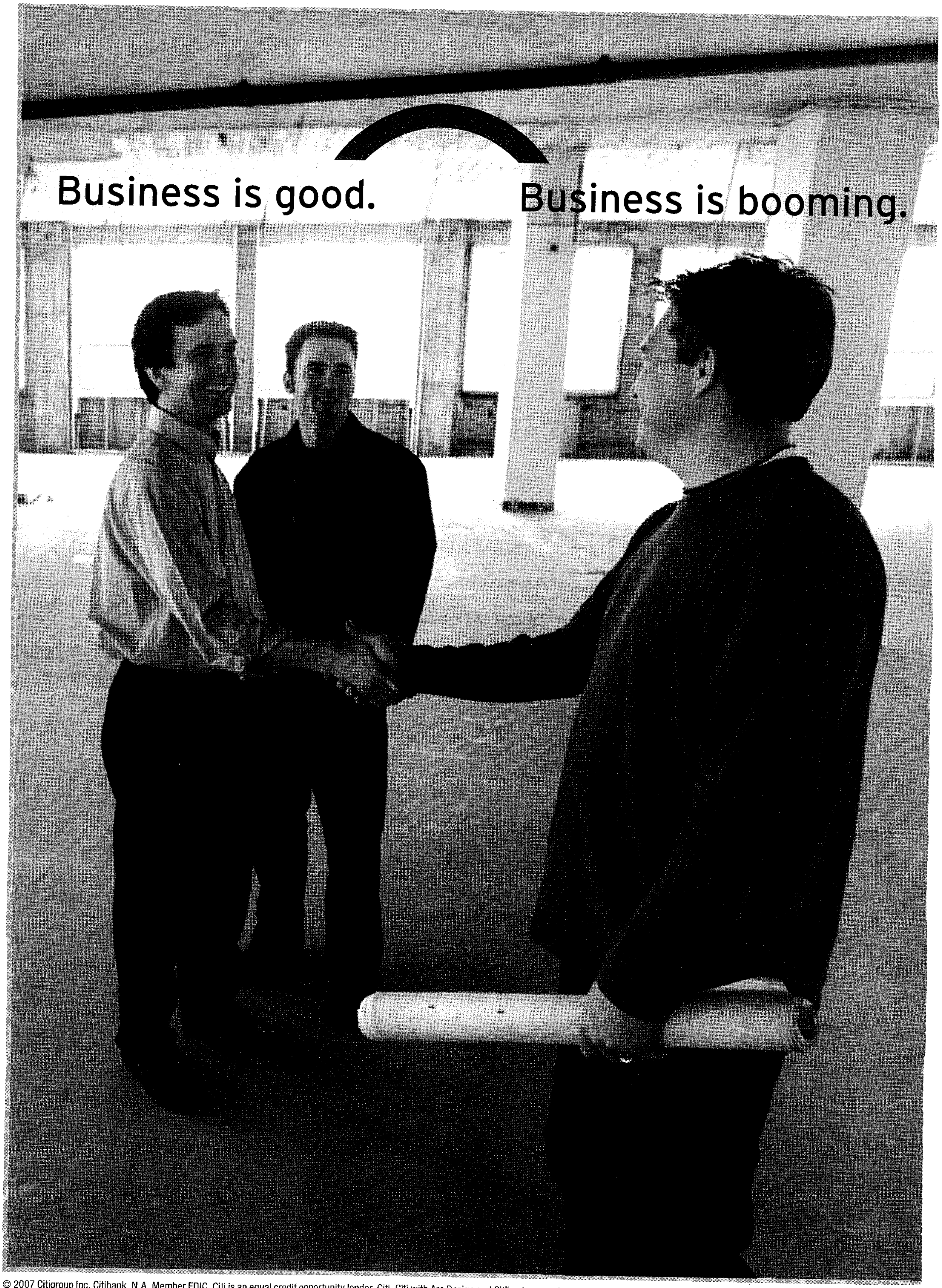
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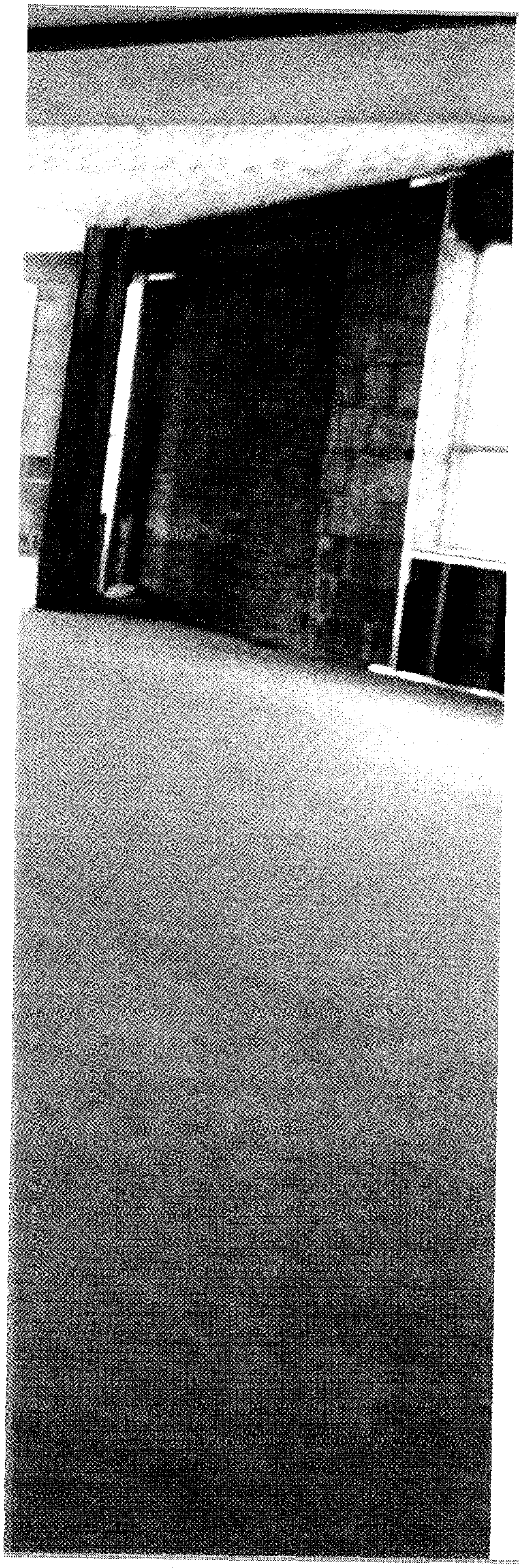

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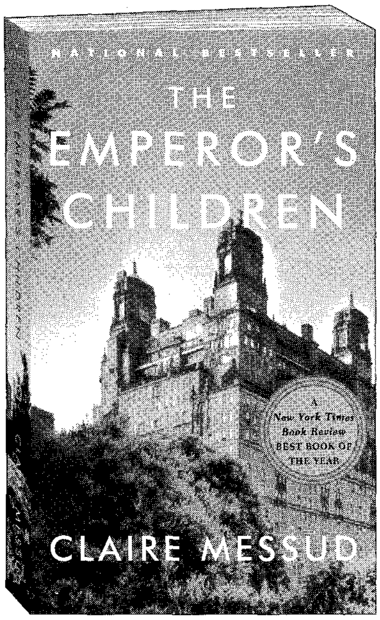

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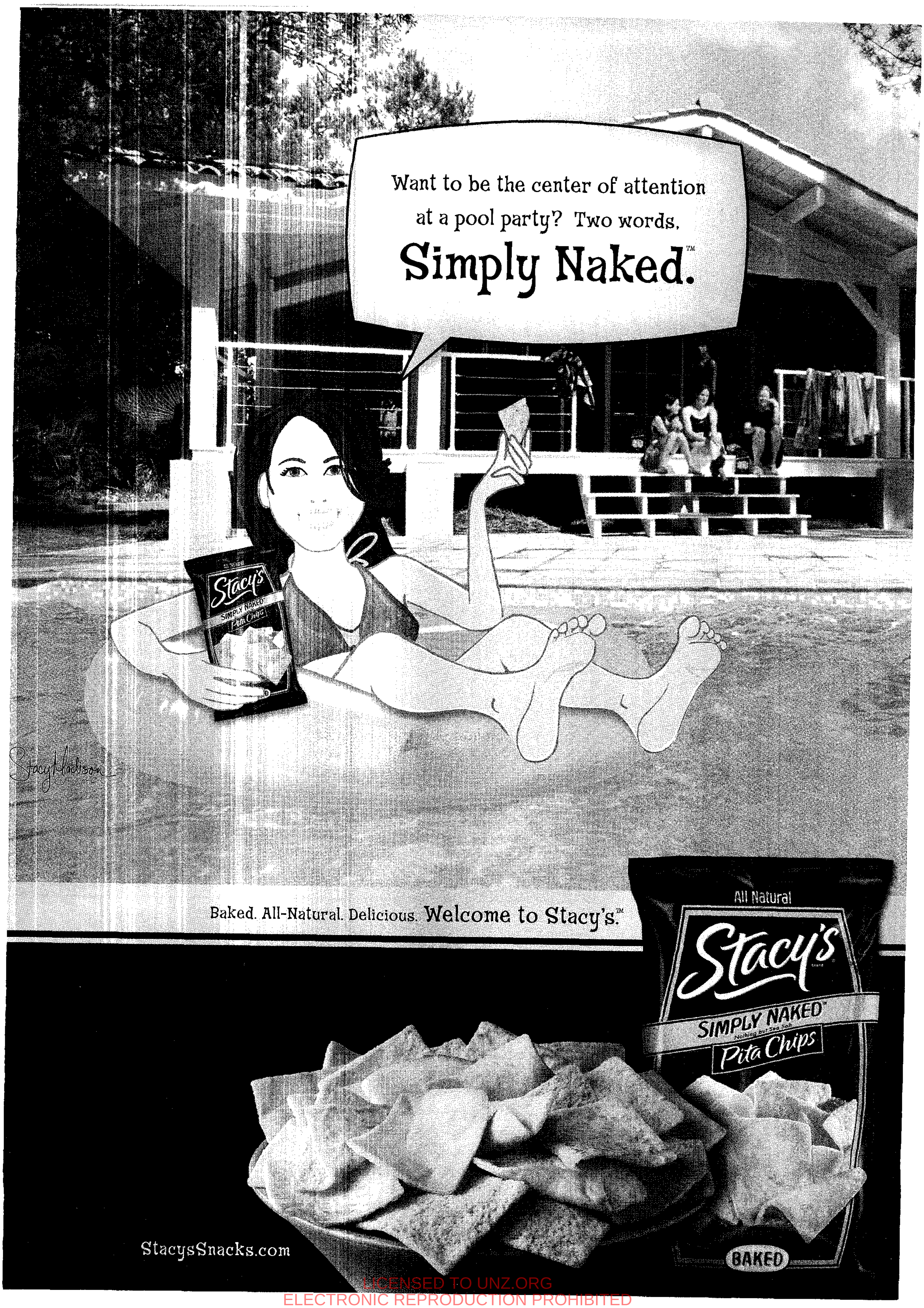
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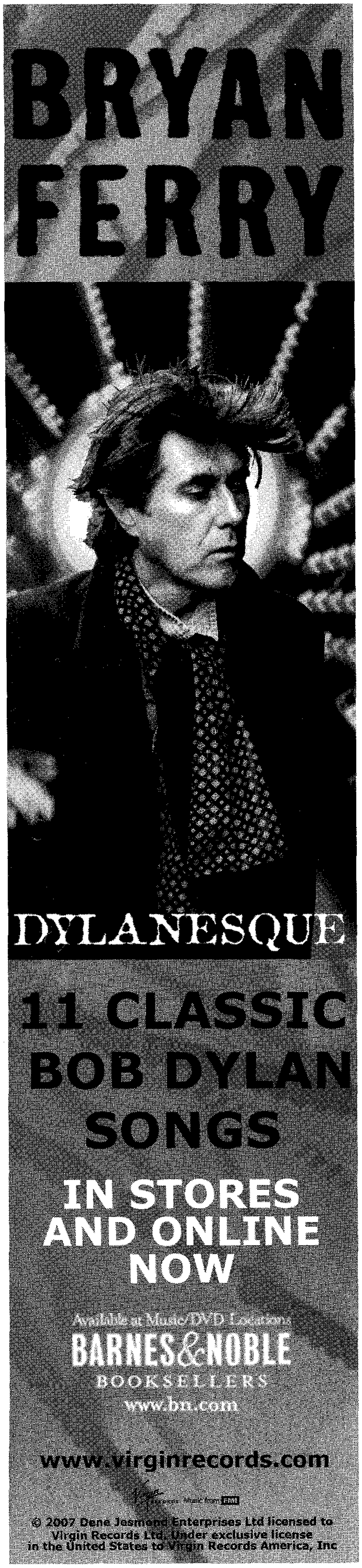

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CONTRIBUTORS

John Cassidy ("Hedge Clipping," p. 28) has been a staff writer since 1995.

George Packer (Comment, p. 23) is the author of "The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq," for which he won a Helen Bernstein Book Award for Excellence in Journalism.

Jack Handey (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 34) has published several humor books, including "Deep Thoughts."

Lauren Collins (The Talk of the Town, p. 25) is the deputy editor of The Talk of the Town.

Shalom Auslander ("Save Us," p. 36) is the author of "Beware of God" and "Foreskin's Lament," which will be published in October.

C. D. Wright (Poem, p. 47), the author of "One Big Self," has a new collection of poems, "Rising, Falling, Hovering," coming out next spring.

Bob Staake (Cover) is a writer and illustrator of children's books, including "This Is Not a Pumpkin," due out in August.

Joyce Carol Oates (Books, p. 74) published her thirty-sixth novel, "The Gravedigger's Daughter," in May.

Ken Auletta ("Promises, Promises," p. 42) writes the magazine's Annals of Communications. He is the author of "Media Man: Ted Turner's Improbable Empire."

Margaret Talbot ("Duped," p. 52) is a staff writer and a Senior Fellow at the New America Foundation.

Barry Blitt (Illustration, p. 53) is an artist and illustrator. He has illustrated many children's books, including "The 39 Apartments of Ludwig van Beethoven."

Maxim Biller (Fiction, p. 62) has published novels, short stories, and essays in German, and writes a regular humor column for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine*.

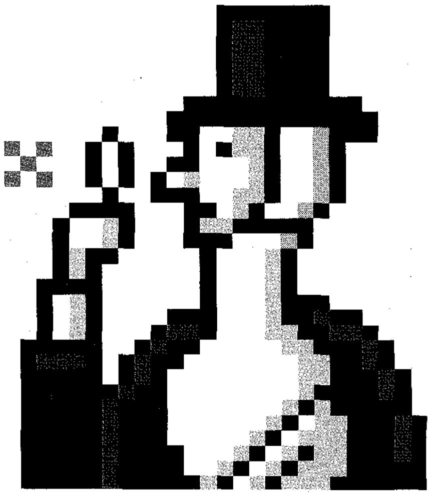
Joan Acocella (Books, p. 66) reviews dance and books for the magazine. She is the author of "Twenty-eight Artists and Two Saints," a collection of essays, which came out in February.

James Longenbach (Poem, p. 64) is the author of three poetry collections, including "Draft of a Letter."

John Updike (Books, p. 76) has a collection of essays and criticism, "Due Considerations," coming out in October.

THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM

Interesting Times, a new blog by *George Packer.* / A Q. & A. with *Maxim Biller* about his fiction and social criticism. / An audio interview with *Ken Auletta* about Rupert Murdoch and the future of the *Wall Street Journal.* / A slide show of cartoons by *J. B. Handelsman.* / Two poems by Barack Obama. / From the archives: *Ken Auletta's* Profile of Murdoch, *Anthony Lane* on Evelyn Waugh, *David Owen* on Stephen L. Carter, and more. / The Film File: thousands of capsule reviews. / Animated cartoons, the caption contest, and a list of *New Yorker* events around the country.



THE MAIL

POLITICAL LEGACIES

George Packer makes an apt comparison between Lyndon B. Johnson and George W. Bush (Comment, June 11th & 18th). In spite of the Great Society programs that Johnson championed through Congress, he will forever be remembered for his misadventures in Vietnam. At the least, though, Johnson's domestic achievements were consistent with his and his party's governing philosophy. By contrast, Bush's signature legislative accomplishments should make conservatives and the G.O.P. wince. The first, the prescription-drug component of Medicare, amounts to the single largest expansion of Medicare since its inception. The second, No Child Left Behind, represents an unprecedented federal intrusion into what is historically the preserve of the states and local authorities. History, then, may judge Bush harshly for both incompetence and inconsistency.

Todd J. Piantedosi
Washington, D.C.

WAR AND MEMORY

Günter Grass's account of his experience as a young recruit in the Waffen S.S. is an interesting and confusing study of how, in telling a story sixty years too late, an author can forget details he would either rather not remember or not have others know ("How I Spent the War," June 4th). He has no idea how his friend managed to obtain for him a jacket that would make him less of a candidate for immediate death at the hands of the Soviets; he admits knowing about the concentration camps to which dissenters were sent, yet says nothing of the Jews who he must have suspected were sent there as well. On the other hand, the essay demonstrates how difficult it is to place blame during times of war. He admits guilt, which he has had to live with for the past six decades, and which I am sure has been extremely painful. And how can we hold accountable someone who, to all intents and purposes, was one of countless brainwashed child soldiers? The holes in Grass's essay raise many questions, but they also remind us of what is happening now—the confusion and absolute mess of war, and how accountable we all become when we believe, a little too easily and absolutely, that we are on the right and noble side of the wars we fight.

Rebecca Wolinsky
New York City

NOTES ON A PREAMBLE

Dan Chiasson, in his review of my work, refers to a proposed preamble to the century-old Australian Constitution, for which I wrote a draft text (Books, June 11th & 18th). Perhaps I won't look like a sorehead if I correct the cluster of mistakes he makes in this passage. The preamble was not to have legal force but to be a statement of community values. The text I wrote in 1999 was never voted on by the people; it was blocked in the Senate by a minority party, which largely disappeared after the next federal election. My text was replaced with a cobbled-together version, which did go to a referendum and got trashed. The only part of my draft retained in that version was a clause honoring Australia's indigenous peoples; our one Aboriginal senator had been highly taken with it and kept it in. I had also honoured our immigrant communities. The most vocal opponents of my draft preamble were the media, not least because I had advocated protection of individuals and groups from hounding on grounds of fashion, ideology, or prejudice. Chiasson is welcome to a copy of my draft preamble if he wishes.

Les Murray
Bunyah, New South Wales, Australia

•

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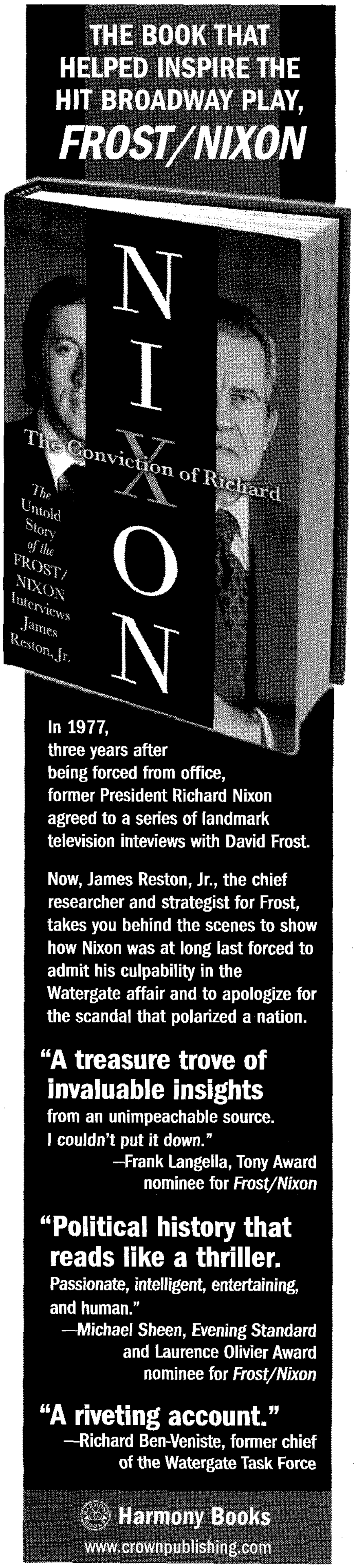
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—Richard Ben-Veniste, former chief of the Watergate Task Force

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The Reverend Billy, of the Church of Stop Shopping. Photograph by Yola Monakhov.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THIS WEEK

NIGHT LIFE
MERCURY RISING

P.S. 1's "Warm Up" music series has long paired high-end design with top d.j.s and live musicians from around the world; the Water Taxi Beach parties, which started last year on the shore of the East River, keep the dancing going late into the night. Both events get under way for the season this Saturday. (See page 12.)

ART
BOLD STROKES

This week is the last chance to see the Neue Galerie's marvellous "Van Gogh and Expressionism" exhibition, which includes several major van Goghs loaned from museums around the world—among them an iconic 1889 self-portrait from the National Gallery in Washington and the Art Institute of Chicago's "The Bedroom," from the same year. (See page 13.)

DANCE
HEAVENLY HOOFER

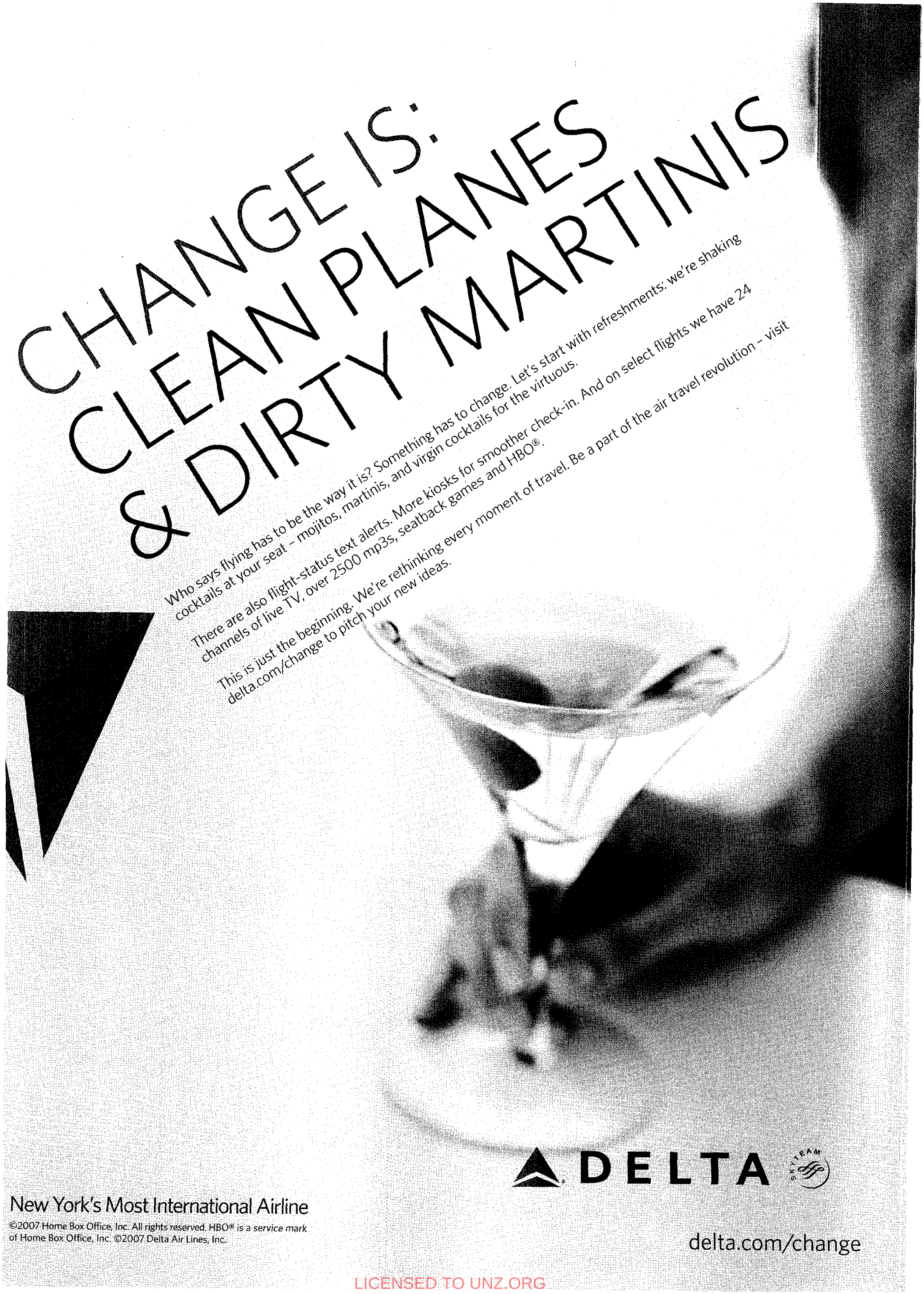
The tap-dancing maestro Savion Glover, for his annual four-week engagement at the Joyce, has a new show. In "Invitations to a Dancer," Glover and two other tap dancers provide the only aural accompaniment for three jazz dancers and a ballerina. (See page 15.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
SHANGHAI KNIGHTS

With its impressive combination of tonal beauty and technical exactitude, the Shanghai Quartet seems poised to inherit the territory currently occupied by the Tokyo String Quartet. The ensemble's appealing program at Music Mountain features Barber's String Quartet (with the Adagio for Strings) and Franck's Piano Quintet (with Melvin Chen). (See page 16.)

MOVIES
SWING STREET

The movies screened in BAM's annual Afro-Punk Festival present widely divergent and radical views of the African-American experience, as in the documentaries "Mingus" and "Jimi Plays Monterey," Samuel Fuller's pulp-noir "White Dog," from 1982, and William Greaves's stunning improvisational masterwork, from 1968, "Symbiopsychotaxiplasm Take One." (See page 17.)



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THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

ABSINTHE
Set amid the mirrors and billowing velvet of the Spiegeltent, this burlesque show includes aerialists, contortionists, and "the wealthiest man in Armenia." Previews begin July 2. (South Street Seaport, Pier 17. 212-279-4200.)

GUILTY
Nancy Manocherian wrote this drama, about a high-society clique in New York. Kira Simring directs. Previews begin July 1. (Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THE LAST YEAR IN THE LIFE OF THE REVEREND DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.
Waterwell premières this rock musical, drawn from King's speeches, writings, and interviews. Directed by Tom Ridgely. In previews. (Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200.)

MORNING STAR
Sylvia Regan's play from 1940, in a Peccadillo Theatre Company production, about Russian Jewish immigrants on Manhattan's Lower East Side circa 1910. Dan Wackerman directs. Previews begin June 28. Opens July 2. (Bank Street Theatre, 155 Bank St. 212-868-4444.)

NO END OF BLAME
The Potomac Theatre Project presents Howard Barker's play, about a political cartoonist struggling with censorship, in repertory with "Politics of Passion," a triptych of early works by Anthony Minghella. Opens June 27. (Atlantic Stage 2, at 330 W. 16th St. 800-838-3006.)

OLD ACQUAINTANCE
Margaret Colin and Harriet Harris star in a revival of John Van Druten's comedy from 1940. Michael Wilson directs the Roundabout Theatre Company production. In previews. Opens June 28. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

XANADU
Douglas Carter Beane wrote the book for this stage version of the movie from 1980, about a roller-skating muse in Venice Beach. Kerry Butler stars. In previews. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

NOW PLAYING

"THE ARGUMENT" / "DINNER PARTY"
Target Margin Theatre and the Kitchen present "The Argument," based on Aristotle's "Poetics," and "Dinner Party," adapted from Plato's "Symposium." David Herskovits directs. (512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793, ext. 11. Through June 30.)

BEHIND THE LID
The avant-garde theatre pioneer Lee Nagrin, who died on June 7, and Basil Twist spent nine years collaborating on this dense, strange, and beautiful work. Set in the basement galleries where Nagrin worked, its scenes are like a mummy portrait of this highly unconventional storyteller and experimental artist, represented here by multiple puppets. The piece traces the symbolic events of Nagrin's lifetime: the bombing of Hiroshima, encountering Artaud and Beckett, recollections of her mother and father (both embodied by the protean Twist, in costume). Twist slips through the work, barefoot and lithe, beckoning the audience to follow him into Nagrin's imagination. We do so willingly, with no small measure of gratitude. (Silver Whale gallery, 21 Bleecker St. 212-868-4444.)

BEYOND GLORY
This Roundabout Theatre Company production takes the tales of real war heroes from Larry Smith's book and turns them into an exercise in vainglory. Stephen Lang, who also adapted the play, flexes, struts, swaggers, hectors; if there were any scenery on the stage, he would chew it. This one-man show is overproduced, overacted, and overlong at eighty minutes. It's not drama, it's narration. Robert Falls directs. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

BRITS OFF BROADWAY
Alan Ayckbourn's "Intimate Exchanges," a series of sixteen variations on one premise, with a different play each performance, and "Radio," by Al Smith, conclude their runs. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. Through July 1.)

ESCAPE FROM BELLEVUE
What's an over-the-hill rocker to do when his buddies, his girlfriends, and the police all get fed up with his boozy suicide threats and decide to deposit him in the psych ward of Bellevue Hospital (on three different occasions)? If he happens to be Christopher Campion, who wrote and stars in this autobiographical work, he might sweet-talk his way past an inexperienced young resident, waltz out the door, and reunite his band to do a show about the whole thing. As it turns out, Campion's shaggy-dog stories about escaping the nuthouse are backed by energetic songs and have an unforced charisma and gusto. He's living proof that if you can't be a rock star on VH1, you can at least live to enjoy your bad reputation in the corridors of Bellevue. (Village Theatre, 158 Bleecker St. 212-307-7171.)

EURYDICE
Sarah Ruhl adapts the myth of Orpheus for this drama, directed by Les Waters. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

FALL FORWARD
As part of the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's "Sitelines" series, Rising Phoenix Repertory presents a new play by Daniel Reitz, about the lives of three New Yorkers after 9/11, performed in the courtyards of John Street United Methodist Church, the oldest church in the city. (44 John St. 212-219-9401. Through June 30.)

GONE MISSING
The Civilians present an updated version of their 2001 musical, based on interviews with New Yorkers about things they have lost. Directed by Steven Cosson, with music and lyrics by Michael Friedman. (Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200.)

IN A DARK DARK HOUSE
Neil LaBute's new drama, about two estranged but rivalrous brothers coming to terms with their memories of the past, including those of an abusive father. The feckless Drew (Ron Livingston), a wealthy but aberrant thirty-five-year-old disbarred lawyer turned real-estate whiz, whose drinking and womanizing are threatening his marriage, meets his older brother, Terry (Frederick Weller), at a fancy rehab clinic. In the complicated unravelling of the narrative, where Terry seems to be direct and certain of his own goodness, Drew is closed down, evasive, and certain of his badness. The play, directed by Carolyn Cantor, is full of strong lines and LaBute's signature subversive moves, but sometimes, no matter how good the writer and the writing, a narrative just doesn't flow right. (Reviewed in our issue of 6/25/07.) (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200.)

RABBIT
A play written and directed by Nina Raine, part of the "Brits Off Broadway" series. (Reviewed in this issue.) (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. Through July 1.)

ROMEO AND JULIET
Michael Greif directs this Shakespeare in the Park production. Lauren Ambrose and Oscar Isaac star. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 212-539-8750.)

THE SECOND TOSCA
In Tom Rowan's winsome behind-the-scenes comedy, the queen bee of the opera world, Gloria (Vivian Reed), is at the twilight of a great career; her second is a young soprano named Lisa (Rachel de Benedet), whose star is rising. The plot hinges on whether the temperamental Gloria will be in voice for the opening night. Besides these two divas, there's a ghostly third—Angelina—who can't resist showing up. The playwright cleverly depicts the willful living characters who haunt the green room,

TABLES FOR TWO
PROVENCE

38 MacDougal St. (212-475-7500)—When Michel Jean opened this homage to his native region, in 1986, it became a neighborhood institution, and, until it closed, a year ago, made its quiet corner of SoHo seem like a piece of French sovereign soil, with its Bastille Day pétanque tournaments and Beaujolais bacchanals in November. Now Marc Meyer and Vicki Freeman (who also own Five Points and Cookshop) have taken on the task of remaking an old favorite for a city in which French bistros are as common as Irish pubs—and sometimes about as French. They spruced up the interior a little but left essentially untouched its two greatest assets: a long windowed frontage on the street, open in the summer, and two delightful rooms at the back, in which floral displays and large skylights give the effect of an indoor garden.

The menu, bearing an epigraph from the Provençal poet Frédéric Mistral, has the sort of regional feel you might expect—the sauces abound with olive tapenades and orange zest, and specialities like *pissaladière* and bouillabaisse occasionally appear—but it ventures as far east as gnocchi and as far south as couscous. At its best, the cooking, aided by a well-chosen array of predominantly southern wines, succeeds in transporting you to a sunny Arlesian fantasyland. The chilled asparagus-and-spring-garlic soup, for instance, is the deepest green imaginable, and its taste, verging on grassy, exploits a bitter note at the vegetable's heart. Grilled porgy is an American fish seemingly on vacation in Marseilles, its belly filled with oregano and bay leaves. Sadly, though, many dishes lack definition and character. Beef daube ought to be vigorously rustic, but here, notwithstanding beautiful baby turnips, it was simply underseasoned. A special of grilled rabbit was unforgivably dry, as parched as a midsummer's day in Haute Provence. In fact, many of the most successful dishes are the less exciting choices—hanger steak, duck rillettes, or anything from the small but excellent raw bar.

Perhaps the restaurant ought to channel *terroir* more thoroughly, giving ratatouille and *soupe au pistou* a permanent spot on the menu, unleashing capers and lavender at every turn, and dredging up a few Provençal curiosities (sheep tripe and feet, anyone?). Not that the restaurant seems to be suffering any lack of popularity. There are certain restaurants that people just want to like, and it's hard to go very wrong in premises so obviously appealing. (Open daily for lunch and dinner. Entrées $18-$27.)

—*Leo Carey*

including an aspiring soubrette who dog-sits for Gloria. Confidently directed by Kevin Newbury, the play treats its milieu with comic intelligence, and the results are blithe and entertaining. (45th Street Theatre, 354 W. 45th St. 212-868-4444. Through July 1.)

10 MILLION MILES
This fetching country-and-Western musical is as straight and accessible as I-95, the road that its two romantic lost souls take from their backwater town in Florida to Worcester, Massachusetts. Molly (Irene Molloy), who is two months pregnant and only recently sober, is heading north to have her baby and give it up for adoption; Duane (Matthew Morrison), who may or may not be the father, is heading north to change his luck. The director, Michael Mayer, along with Patty Griffin (music and lyrics) and Keith Bunin (book), teases poignance and nuance out of longing. Molloy holds her own with the buff, crew-cut Morrison, which is saying a lot; Morrison just has that incandescent thing, and the show provides all the oxygen that he needs to glow. (6/25/07) (Atlantic Theatre Company, 336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

OUT OF TOWN

BAY STREET THEATRE
Lonny Price directs Rebecca Lenkiewicz's play "The Night Season," about a film star who ends up in the home of three feisty sisters while working in Ireland. Through July 1. (Sag Harbor, N.Y. 631-725-9500.)

BERKSHIRE THEATRE FESTIVAL
Eric Hill directs Tennessee Williams's "The Glass Menagerie," at the Unicorn, through June 30. On the Main Stage, Terrence McNally's Tony-winning play from 1995, "Love! Valour! Compassion!," continues its run. Rick Cleveland's one-man show "My Pal George" begins previews July 3. For more information, visit www.berkshiretheatre.org. (Stockbridge, Mass. 413-298-5576.)

HUDSON VALLEY SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL
On the tented outdoor stage at Boscobel, "Richard III," directed by Terrence O'Brien, plays in repertory with "As You Like It," directed by Kurt Rhoads, which is in previews and opens June 30. For more information, visit www.hvshakespeare.org. (Garrison, N.Y. 845-265-9575.)

WILLIAMSTOWN THEATRE FESTIVAL
Alicia Witt and Daniel Gerroll star in the world première of "Dissonance," by Damian Lanigan, a play about the culture clash between a rock star and a string quartet. For a full schedule, visit www.wtfestival.org. (Williamstown, Mass. 413-597-3400.)

Also Playing

AVENUE Q: Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE BRIG:** Living Theatre, 19-21 Clinton St. 212-352-3101. **A CHORUS LINE:** Schoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **COMPANY:** Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. Through July 1. **CURTAINS:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE DROWSY CHAPERONE:** Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-307-4100. **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY: THE ROAST OF UTOPIA:** 47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **FROM RIVERDALE TO RIVERHEAD:** Studio Dante, 257 W. 29th St. 212-868-4444. Through June 30. **FROST/NIXON:** Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **GASLIGHT:** Irish Repertory, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737. **GREY GARDENS:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **HAIRSPRAY:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100. **HORIZON:** New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200. Through July 1. **110 IN THE SHADE:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-239-6200. **INHERIT THE WIND:** Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **LEGALLY BLONDE THE MUSICAL:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4100. **MARY POPPINS:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4747. **PASSING STRANGE:** Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555. Through July 1. **RADIO GOLF:** Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. Through July 1. **SPRING AWAKENING:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **THE YEAR OF MAGICAL THINKING:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BLENDER THEATRE AT GRAMERCY
127 E. 23rd St. (212-307-7171)—July 2: The Australian proto-punk collective **Radio Birdman** was formed in 1974 by an uprooted Michigan native named Deniz Tek. Practicing the same sort of double-barrelled rock as Michigan's favorite sons the MC5 and the Stooges, Radio Birdman became a favorite of the Aussie punk scene, and their albums became prized Stateside by unshaven record geeks in ill-fitting Ramones T-shirts. Three decades later, the band has re-formed, much to the delight of its fans.

CELEBRATE BROOKLYN!
Prospect Park Band Shell, Prospect Park W. at 9th St. (718-855-7882, ext. 45)—June 26-27: **Manu Chao** performs a benefit concert. Born in Paris to Spanish parents, Chao sings in the tongues of his birthplace and his ancestors, as well as in English and other languages. His hyperactively rhythmic music is an enticing mesh of multicultural influences. June 29: The JVC Jazz Festival presents **Groove Collective, Ravi Coltrane,** and **Craig Harris.** June 30: A taste of the Montreal rock scene, with the **Stills,** the **Sam Roberts Band,** and **Malajube.**

CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE
Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. (212-360-2777)—June 28: **Levon Helm,** the former Band drummer and vocalist, sometime actor ("Coal Miner's Daughter"), and throat-cancer survivor, plays a benefit show. June 30: **Ozomatli,** the extra-large Latin-funk collective from L.A. July 1: The highly versatile Mexican guitar duo **Rodrigo y Gabriela.**

JONES BEACH THEATRE
Wantagh, N.Y. (212-307-7171)—June 29: **Bob Dylan,** the most accessible music legend in America, is on a seemingly never-ending tour. He's coming off three of the very best albums of his career, and the reports are that he's out from behind the keyboards and is roaming the stage with the electric guitar again. July 2: **Rush** may be the punch line of virtually every joke about Canadian rock, but the group itself is laughing all the way to the bank. Having gradually evolved over the course of nearly two dozen studio albums, from three Zepplinesque players prone to excess into a strenuously accomplished and versatile unit, Rush unites metalheads, computer geeks, and po-faced Ayn Rand fans in adoration of its erudite and burly rock.

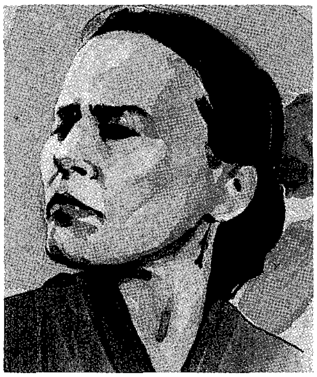
MADISON SQUARE GARDEN
Seventh Ave. at 33rd St. (212-307-7171)—June 30: **Morrissey's** wan visage and plangent voice, coupled with his sexually ambiguous lyrics, helped make the Smiths one of the more original and beloved bands of the post-punk era. Since the band's acrimonious schism toward the end of the eighties, the patron saint of effete British melancholy has been dogged by pleas to reunite with his estranged comrades. Such a resumption of duty seems out of the question, and Morrissey has pursued a solo career fraught with hills and valleys.

MCCARREN PARK POOL
Lorimer St. between Bayard St. and Driggs Ave., Brooklyn (no phone)—July 1: A fantastic free triple bill. **Man Man** is a shifting collective of excitable performers from Philadelphia with a "Flying Circus" approach to art rock. **Illinois** hails from Pennsylvania, and, despite (or is it because of?) its front man Chris Archibald's affinity for the banjo, it rocks with scrupulous originality. **Dengue Fever** is a polyethnic six-piece band out of Los Angeles that plays trippy Cambodian pop songs from the sixties (the lead singer, Chhom Nimol, is a native of Battambong, and she sings in Khmer). (For more information, visit www.thepoolparties.com.)

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
GREEK TRAGEDY

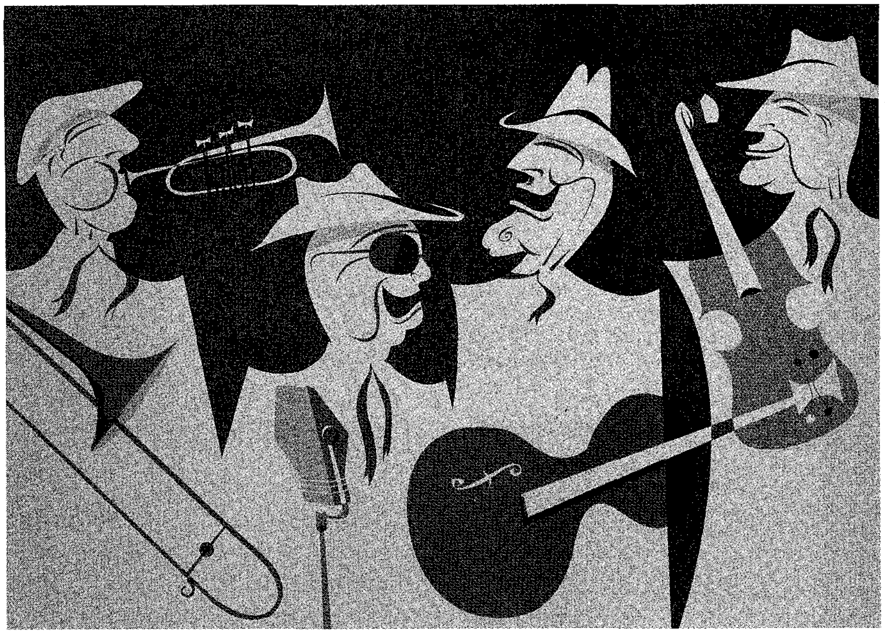
Of the flamenco dancers I have seen, Soledad Barrio, the star of Noche Flamenca, is the most severe and the most internal. In Noche Flamenca's current season, which runs through July 29 at Theatre 80, in the East Village, she and Alejandro Granados—plus three more dancers and the usual phalanx of guitarists and singers—are presenting a show that is mostly about sorrow, but in flamenco, which is not a lighthearted endeavor, there are degrees of sorrow. Granados's solo is a *siguiriya.* According to Martín Santangelo, the troupe's artistic director (and Barrio's husband), "A *siguiriya* is when there's no hope left. It's not a Greek tragedy. It's an immediate tragedy." Barrio, for her part, is doing a *soleá,* which *is* a Greek tragedy. "*Soleá* means solitude," Santangelo explains, "and this dance is when you find yourself utterly alone. You're trying to escape loneliness, and finally you just accept it." From night to night, Santangelo says, Barrio's *soleá* runs anywhere from fourteen to twenty minutes: "It's a matter of how much they sing to her, how much she asks them to go on."

—*Joan Acocella*



MICHAEL GILLETTE

MIDSUMMER NIGHT SWING
The alfresco dancing at Lincoln Center continues on June 27 with the Irish reels and jigs of the **Pride of New York Ceili Band.** June 28: **David Ostwald's Gully Low Jazz Band** keeps alive the sounds of the nineteen-twenties and thirties. (Note: There is an extra, acoustic, set later this night.) June 29: A night of Western swing with **Bob Wills' Texas Playboys.** The band is now led by Wills' longtime vocalist, Leon Rausch, and it includes Tommy Allsup, Buddy Holly's guitarist who famously was not on the plane that fatal night in 1959 (he lost his seat in a coin toss with Ritchie Valens). June 30: Salsa *dura* with **Ray Rodriguez & Swing Sabroso.** July 3: **Todd Londagin,** the tap-dancing trombonist and co-founder of the Flying Neutrinos, swings by with his big band. (Note: There is a dance contest this night.) (212-721-6500. Through July 21.)



Bob Wills' Texas Playboys play Lincoln Center's Midsummer Night Swing.

"P.S. 1 WARM UP"
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—This outdoor dance party, which takes place every Saturday through Sept. 1, gets under way on June 30 at 3 as the dance-rock label DFA plays host to a number of its acts, including **Invisible Conga People, Tim & Tim,** and the **Juan Maclean.** The music and dancing takes place in the museum's courtyard, which is outfitted each year by specially chosen young architects. This summer, the Los Angeles firm Ball-Nogues has the honor. Its installation features canopies of tinted translucent Mylar panels and communal hammocks.

WATER TAXI BEACH
East River, Long Island City (no phone)—On Saturday nights, this seasonal oasis (four hundred tons of white sand complete with tables and a bar adjacent to the New York Water Taxi's Long Island City ferry stop) is home to a d.j. dance party. **Prins Thomas,** from Norway, is the headliner on June 30. He joins the resident Saturday-night d.j.s **Justin Carter, Probus,** and the **Brothers' Brothers.** (For more information, visit www.watertaxibeach.com.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—June 26-July 6: The vocalist **Claire Martin,** a celebrated figure in England. Her new album, "He Never Mentioned Love: Remembering Shirley Horn," is a tribute to the masterly singer.

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—June 26-30: The Italian alto-saxophonist wunderkind **Francesco Cafiso,** who is all of eighteen, and his quartet take on Charlie Parker's "Bird with Strings" recordings, with support from the **I Soloisti di Perugia** chamber orchestra.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—June 26-July 1: A band of nineteen-sixties contemporaries fronted by the saxophonist **Sonny Fortune** salutes the music of John Coltrane. The tenor saxophonist **Billy Harper** and the trumpeter **Eddie Henderson** are on board for the first three nights; the trumpeter **Charles Sullivan** sits in for the remainder of the run.

HIGHLINE BALLROOM
431 W. 16th St. (212-414-5994)—June 30: The slightly anarchic piano trio the **Bad Plus** marries topnotch musicianship with an unabashed appetite for a wide variety of music. Its repertoire includes songs by the likes of Black Sabbath and Vangelis, and its latest album, "Prog," includes a cover of Rush's "Tom Sawyer."

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—As part of the JVC Jazz Festival, this club is home to "World Jazz Nights" this week. June 27: The Israeli trumpeter **Avishai Cohen** leads a promising sextet featuring the guitarist **Lionel Loueke** and the pianist **Jason Lindner.** June 28-30: **Roswell Rudd,** the man who brought free jazz to the trombone four decades ago, now joins with African musicians in the **Malicool** septet.

JVC JAZZ FESTIVAL
The festival winds up this week. Highlights follow. The bassist **Ron Carter** gets an all-star seventieth-birthday tribute at Carnegie Hall on June 27. Also on that night, the pioneering fusion violinist **Jean-Luc Ponty** appears with his band in Zankel Hall, and the pianist **Geri Allen** and her trio play the Studio Museum in Harlem. On June 29, there's another all-star seventieth-birthday bash, this time for the singer **Nancy Wilson,** at Carnegie Hall; a touch of left-of-center jazz pops up at the Rubin Museum of Art, courtesy of the saxophonist **Ned Rothenberg** and the drummer **Glen Velez;** and Brooklyn's Prospect Park is home to a free show with **Groove Collective,** the **Ravi Coltrane** quartet, and the **Craig Harris Ensemble** (see Celebrate Brooklyn!, above). The closing night, June 30, features the Carnegie Hall début of the banjo virtuoso **Béla Fleck & the Flecktones,** with the exceptional bluegrass ensemble the **Del McCoury Band** opening. (For more information, visit www.festivalproductions.net.)

RIVER TO RIVER FESTIVAL
June 27: The swinging guitarist and singer **John Pizzarelli** is joined by **Paula West,** a superb West Coast-based vocalist, for a free show in Rockefeller Park. (Battery Park City. For more info, visit www.rivertorivernyc.com.)

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—The frighteningly adept bassist **Christian McBride** has been known to wade into electric funk from time to time, yet to judge from the company he's keeping in his new Situation Vol. 4 band (June 26-July 1), hard-swinging mainstream jazz will be the order of the day. His bandmates include the pianist **Eric Reed** and the saxophonist **Steve Wilson.**

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"Poiret: King of Fashion,"** a survey of the career of the Parisian designer Paul Poiret (1879-1944), is at the Costume Institute through Aug. 5. ♦ **"Neo Rauch at the Met: Para"** presents new paintings by the Leipzig-based artist. Through Oct. 14. ♦ **"Impressionist and Early Modern Paintings: The Clark Brothers Collect."** Robert Sterling Clark (1877-1956) and Stephen Carlton Clark (1882-1960) were scions of the Singer sewing-machine fortune—their wealth can be gauged by the fact that each inherited, among other assets, a square block of Manhattan. Both spent money on paintings, though a feud divided the brothers, and they took different routes. Sterling ran away to Paris, where he bought Manets, Toulouse-Lautrecs, and thirty-nine Renoirs. Stephen stayed home, managed the business, and bought from Eakins and Homer, Matisse and Bonnard. The show is compelling not only for its preponderance of early-modern masterworks but also for what it demonstrates about that old-fashioned quality called taste. Through Aug. 19. ♦ **"Frank Stella on the Roof."** Through Oct. 28. ♦ **"Frank Stella: Painting Into Architecture"** presents the prolific artist's designs for architectural structures. Through Aug. 5. ♦ Almost nine centuries of cultural and commercial exchange are documented in the exhibition **"Venice and the Islamic World, 828-1797."** From the start, the Venetians had an attitude of enthusiastic curiosity about the exotic arrivals in their port, dressing their doges in Ottoman brocades and decorating their homes and churches with imported carpets, glass, and metalwork. The tides carried influence both ways, and Murano glass, for instance, was favored by Mamluk sultans starting in the late fifteenth century. Efforts to profit from the intercontinental traffic were not always so successful: witness the sole surviving copy of a 1537-1538 printing of the Koran, an ill-conceived project in a time when it was believed that the only respectful way to reproduce that book was by hand. (The introduction of typos only made things worse.) Scattered throughout the exhibit are exquisite maps of the then-known world; the uncertain coastlines and tiny flags indicating political loyalties underline the risk and romance of sea voyages in the years before military tensions increased and Venice finally fell to Napoleon. Through July 8. ♦ **"One of a Kind: The Studio Craft Movement."** Through Sept. 3. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Richard Serra Sculpture: Forty Years."** Through Sept. 10. ♦ **"Picasso's 'Demoiselles d'Avignon' at 100."** Through Aug. 27. ♦ **"Projects 85: Dan Perjovschi."** Through Aug. 27. ♦ **"Barry Frydlender: Place and Time."** Through Sept. 3. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—The telescoping spiral of Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim rotunda is in the midst of a summerlong restoration, so it's a timely moment to consider how geometry sculpts the void. **"The Shapes of Space"** culls works from the permanent collection and will evolve over the summer, moving upward as the renovation progresses. Through Sept. 5. ♦ **"Frank**

PASCAL BLANCHET

Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum: Restoring a Masterpiece." Through July 8. ♦ **"Divisionism/Neo-Impressionism: Arcadia and Anarchy."** Through Aug. 6. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—The twenty-year survey **"Rudolf Stingel"** reviews the career of the artist best known to New Yorkers for covering floors at Grand Central Terminal in garish, sound-muffling floral carpeting. Opens June 28. ♦ **"Summer of Love: Art of the Psychedelic Era."** Through Sept. 16. ♦ **"Lincoln Kirstein"** honors the late, great aesthete, connoisseur, and impresario on the centenary of his birth, with an exhibition of work by artists he championed, including Walker Evans, Elie Nadelman, and Pavel Tchelitchew. Through Aug. 27. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

MORGAN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM
225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. (212-685-0008)—**"From Berlin to Broadway: The Ebb Bequest of Modern German and Austrian Drawings."** Forty-three drawings and watercolors dating from the early twentieth century, from the collection of the lyricist Fred Ebb, who left them to the Morgan upon his death, in 2004. Through Sept. 2. ♦ **"Federico da Montefeltro and His Library."** Through Sept. 30. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5, Fridays, 10:30 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
Fifth Ave. at 103rd St. (212-534-1672)—**"Facing Fascism: New York and the Spanish Civil War."** Through Aug. 12. ♦ **"The *Jewish Daily Forward:* Embracing an Immigrant Community."** Through Sept. 17. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

NEUE GALERIE
1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200)—**"Van Gogh and Expressionism."** Through July 2. (Open Thursdays, and Saturdays through Mondays, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 11 to 9.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—**"Organizing Chaos,"** Through Sept. 24. ♦ If the recent survey "High Times, Hard Times: New York Painting 1967-1975" whetted your appetite for underappreciated post-minimal abstraction, another taste awaits in a truncated retrospective of paintings by **Peter Young**. Focussing on the period from 1963 to 1977, the show cycles through Young's geometric, systems-based, but stubbornly expressive nonobjective colorism, with surfaces that bring to mind game boards and motherboards, mandalas and neo-Pointillist dot fields, paramecia and acid blotters. Reflecting Young's tuned-in, dropped-out sojourns in Costa Rica and Oaxaca, there are also canvases stretched on branches of Ponderosa pine, and "bead paintings"—canvasless chunks of polychrome acrylic strung like necklaces. Through Sept. 24. ♦ **"Linder."** Through Sept. 24. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Summer-hours warning: Many galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. Others follow the normal Tuesday-to-Saturday schedule. It's best to call ahead.

MIKIKO HARA
For her U.S. début, this Japanese photographer shows work made between 1996 and 2001, much of which is not just in color but about color: a sheer gold curtain, a bright-yellow backpack. As with so many contemporary artists, Hara's content is incidental; it's her style that counts. Although there are people in many of her pictures, these commuters, pedestrians, shoppers, and beachgoers rarely get more than a passing glance from Hara. Because she's not making portraits, her photographs look more like film outtakes or snapshots—tossed off and pointedly insignificant. The style works best for chaotic pictures of flowers and foliage, in one of which a white kitten yawns comically wide. Through July 21. (Cohen Amador, 41 E. 57th St. 212-759-6740.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

JESSE BRANSFORD / HUSTON RIPLEY / DIKE BLAIR
A troika of solo shows contemplate transcendence and sensory overload. Bransford, whose work fills the main gallery, ponders alchemical and astrological themes with urgent mark-making. Ripley borrows the Buddhist mandala form, with densely inked drawings on tissue paper featuring lacy and serpentine naked bodies. Blair's hyperprecise sculptures, in contrast, conjoin packing crates, power cords, and fragile, Photo-Realistic gouaches, suggesting something like makeshift altars in a Home Depot. Through June 29. (Feature, 530 W. 25th St. 212-675-7772.)

GENE DAVIS
Just as France has her master of stripes, Daniel Buren, America had hers: Gene Davis (1920-85). Davis's work simultaneously celebrates and confounds the notion of stripes as reductive; they're simple and minimal, but they can be coördinated in an infinite number of ways. Here, we're treated not just to paintings but to simple pastel line drawings and prints. One painting is long and skinny; another is a soothing cream monochrome. A painting titled "Homage to Matisse" nods more directly to Morris Louis. You can also see how Davis was bent on ridding his work of "literary overtones." Zippy titles like "Celestial Hammer" and "Little Niagra" add a poetic dimension, but they firmly resist explanation. Through June 30. (Cowles, 537 W. 24th St. 212-741-8999.)

ROBERTO DE LUNA
De Luna's show is appealingly, deceptively casual. His photographs, blown up from color and black-and-white Polaroid originals, have been printed in a variety of sizes and pinned right to the wall in a meandering trail around the room. This self-effacing tactic only works when the material is confident and unpretentious, and De Luna knows when to lay back. It helps that his subject is Los Angeles: palm trees, beaches, surfers, studio back lots, iconic office blocks, cacti, cemeteries. Familiar territory, perhaps, and De Luna doesn't entirely avoid romantic or cynical clichés, but he also engages the place with affection, feeling, and a keen eye. Through June 30. (Halpert, 511 W. 25th St. 646-827-9890.)

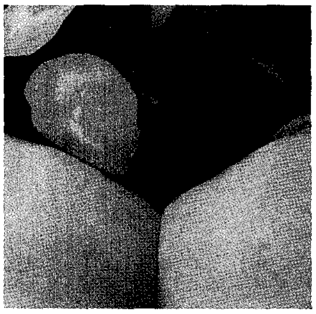
ELIJAH GOWIN
Although he shares his father's appreciation of the mysterious in the everyday, Emmet Gowin's son Elijah is a photographer in a very different mold. The pictures in his second solo show combine images he's appropriated from the Internet or TV with images he's photographed. The resulting collages—of people falling from the sky and figures floating or half-submerged in water—are digitally scanned but output as paper negatives that turn into these grainy, streaked, and crudely vignetted ink-jet prints. Although his process grabs a little too much attention, Gowin uses it shrewdly. His figures in midair are at once sublime and unsettling, recalling the divers in Aaron Siskind's "Pleasures & Terrors of Levitation" series and bodies tumbling from the World Trade Center. Through June 30. (Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave., at 24th St. 212-989-7600.)

STUART O'SULLIVAN
O'Sullivan's previous show explored his family's deep emotional roots in South Africa. His new color photographs sketch out the similarly complex and coded history of the patrician New England family of his wife, Dionicia. With pictures of ancestral portraits and relics and glimpses of the family home, O'Sullivan can only skim the surface of that history, but an image of logs in dark, shallow water suggests that much of the story remains submerged. Dionicia appears in several of the photos, nearly always facing away from the camera, as if contemplating the past or the future. The present, no matter how lovely, seems almost beside the point. Through July 13. (Cooney, 511 W. 25th St. 212-255-8158.)

ERICK SWENSON
It takes guts to stake your whole second New York solo show on a single fifteen-foot-by-twenty-four-foot work, but that's exactly what Swenson has done. A

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
FULL SPECTRUM

Martin Parr, the British photographer famous for color work that both relishes and skewers contemporary vulgarity, is ever so politely miffed that William Eggleston, Stephen Shore, Joel Meyerowitz, and other Americans tend to get all the credit for introducing color to the black-and-white world of art photography in the seventies. To counter this notion, Parr has organized "Colour Before Color," a savvy, pointedly argumentative show at Hasted Hunt that rounds up six European photographers—Luigi Ghirri, Ed Van der Elsken, Carlos Pérez Siquier, Keld Helmer-Petersen, John Hinde, and Peter Mitchell—whose achievements in color have gone largely unnoticed. Excepting Helmer-Petersen's enigmatic architectural details from the forties, the work here is roughly contemporaneous with that of the U.S. pioneers, but it's much quirkier. Parr's appetite for the vernacular finds vivid expression in photographs by his fellow-Brits Mitchell and Hinde, but his most exciting discovery is Siquier, from Spain, whose pictures of sunbathers echo Parr's own satires in a gentler, more affectionate, and considerably sexier mode.



—Vince Aletti

CARLOS PÉREZ SIQUIER

hyperrealist sculpture made from resin, polystyrene, and fibreboard depicts the carcass of a killer whale floating in an icy sea. Those familiar with nineteenth-century Romanticism will flash back to Caspar David Friedrich's paintings of an Arctic shipwreck and a monk facing a similarly chilly scene. While technical virtuosity is expected in natural-history museums, it's surprising in an art gallery, where substance these days is celebrated over skill. Swenson's work, unfortunately, leans toward the latter. Through June 30. (James Cohan, 533 W. 26th St. 212-714-9500.)

"DANIEL LÓPEZ"

This group show of Chilean artists and artists' collaboratives takes its title from an alias Augusto Pinochet used in illicit bank transactions. Assumed or confused identities, laconic violence, and greed thus drive the work here, which includes installation, video, photography, and drawing. Diego Fernández uses newspaper clippings sealed under lurid green Plexiglas to rhyme the 2004 siege of Fallujah with the movie "Top Gun"; Mario Navarro submits posters spelling out lyrics from Zeppelin to Gnarls Barkley, assembling a found poem of lust, deception, and amnesia; and Ian Szydlowski cuts to the chase with a chain of gold-plated human teeth. Through June 30. (Roebling Hall, 606 W. 26th St. 212-929-8180.)

Short List

ASSUME VIVID ASTRO FOCUS: Connelly, 625 W. 27th St. 212-337-9563. Through June 30. **PETER FISCHLI AND DAVID WEISS:** Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 212-243-0200. Through June 30. **ANDREAS GURSKY:** Marks, 522 W. 22nd St.; 523 W. 24th St. 212-243-0200. Through June 30. **HAIM STEINBACH:** Sonnabend, 536 W. 22nd St. 212-627-1018. Through June 30. **RICHARD TUTTLE:** Sperone Westwater, 415 W. 13th St. 212-999-7337. Through June 30. **"COLOUR BEFORE COLOR":** Hasted Hunt, 529 W. 20th St. 212-627-0006. Through July 20. **"IN DEFENSE OF ARDOR":** Bellwether, 134 Tenth Ave., at 18th St. 212-929-5959. Through June 30.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

PEARL BLAUVELT / MCDERMOTT & MCGOUGH

The curator Bob Nickas has joined the self-taught artist Blauvelt (1893-1987) in a show with David

Verso Limited Editions' portfolio of platinum prints, "Magnum Founders, in Celebration of Sixty Years," honors the anniversary of the coöperative founded by Robert Capa, Henri Cartier-Bresson, David (Chim) Seymour, and George Rodger (above, Rodger's "Chad 1941: Hausa Chieftains Demonstrate Their Superb Horsemanship in a 'Fantasia'"). The book will be available for viewing at the Howard Greenberg gallery, 41 E. 57th St., as part of this summer's Magnum Festival.

McDermott and Peter McGough, contemporary artists whose anachronistic obsessions and dandy antics have often put them outside the mainstream. Blauvelt's drawings on notebook paper, made in the forties and fifties and discovered after her death in her former home in northeastern Pennsylvania, feature items like houses, clothes, and a carefully rendered hundred-and-fifty-dollar bill. McDermott & McGough's painting of seal and initial rings and curvy drawings derived from embroidery and needlepoint samplers are oddly fitting complements, even if you sense two very different impetuses at work. Through June 30. (KS Art, 73 Leonard St. 212-219-9918.)

DANCE

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE

After the blood-ridden drama of "Romeo and Juliet," A.B.T. moves on to the more ethereal world of "Swan Lake," populated with creatures enslaved by sorcery, its story line defined by promises made and too soon broken. The great Georgian ballerina Nina Ananiashvili dances the central role on June 28, with the winsome and fleet-footed Angel Corella as her ardent but easily distracted Prince. Another change of mood, toward the satiric, takes place July 2, with contrasting readings of the role of Cinderella in James Kudelka's cartoonish version of the Prokofiev ballet. In the lead role, Julie Kent (on July 2) illuminates the transformation from girl to woman in love, while Gillian Murphy (on July 3) fully inhabits the role as a plucky tomboy. ♦ June 26 and June 28-29 at 8 and June 27 and June 30 at 2 and 8: "Swan Lake." ♦ July 2-3 at 8: "Cinderella." (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000. Through July 7.)

SAVION GLOVER

"Invitations to a Dancer," the tap virtuoso's four-week engagement at the Joyce, continues its run. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. June 26 and July 2-3 at 7:30, June 27 at 2 and 7:30, June 28-29 at 8, and June 30 at 2 and 8. Through July 14.)

CEDAR LAKE CONTEMPORARY BALLET

The well-heeled West Side troupe stages Ohad Naharin's greatest-hits collection, "Decadance." (547 W. 26th St. 212-868-4444. June 26-30 at 8 and July 1 at 7.)

ANTIGRAVITY

This aerial dance troupe, which has collaborated with the likes of Franco Zeffirelli (in his "Turandot" at the Met) and Britney Spears, defies the force of gravity with its arsenal of uplifting contraptions, from bungee cords and trapezes to special "anti-gravity boots" that send its gymnast-dancers flying fifteen feet into the air. The current show continues the company's tradition of representing the triumph of muscle power and energy over physics, complemented by pulsing pop and effervescent visuals. (Hammerstein Ballroom, 311 W. 34th St. 212-307-4100. June 27-29 and July 1-2 at 8 and June 30 at 2 and 8.)

NOCHE FLAMENCA

The beloved Spanish troupe, starring Soledad Barrio, shows flamenco at its intimate, traditional best. (Theatre 80, at 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-352-3101. June 27-29 at 8, June 30 at 2 and 8, and July 1 at 2 and 5. Through July 29.)

TRICIA BROUK

"Dining Alone" ties together three character-based dances from the past decade of Brouk's career—by Annie-B Parson, Dušan Týnek, and Eun Me Ahn—with two new solos of her own devising. Four other performers help to set the scene, but the focus is on Brouk's considerable talents as an actor-dancer. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. June 28-30 at 7:30.)

DRE.DANCE

"Re." is the first repertory program for the company formed three years ago by the actor Taye Diggs and Andrew Palermo, a backward glance over the ground they've travelled so far. That's accessible terrain—high-octane, lyrics-based pieces, short, theatrical, and sometimes overwrought. The program's première, "Henk Feyn," captures the driven energy of New Yorkers and so sums up the choreographers' joint aesthetic to date. After this, they say, come longer pieces, collaborations with composers, and more music without lyrics. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 212-334-7479. June 28-30 at 8.)

GLEN RUMSEY DANCE PROJECT

The onetime Merce Cunningham company member and sometime drag artist Glen Rumsey uses memories from childhood—like playing with dolls or stitching dresses with his mother's sewing machine—to shape his new project, "Little Virtue." The evening-length dance (with whimsical costumes by Rumsey) is an exploration of gender roles and the creative impulses of those who move outside them. The cast is a mix of former Cunninghamites, downtown dance figures (like Todd Williams), and artists from the drag and vaudeville circuits. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. June 28-July 1 at 8:30.)

OUT OF TOWN

JACOB'S PILLOW

Coleman Lemieux & Compagnie, a highly skilled Montreal-based pickup company led by the husband-and-wife team of Bill Coleman and Laurence Lemieux, brings a world première by James Kudelka, along with his wonderful varieties-of-love suite, "Fifteen Heterosexual Duets." They also re-create "The Dome," a work that the Pillow founder Ted Shawn made for his Men Dancers, on a cast of children, including their own. "Aurélia's Oratorio" is not exactly dance—the curtains and the costumes dance more than the performers do—but theatrical whimsy of a high order. Starring Aurélia Thierrée, a charming waif who's the daughter of a French *cirque-nouveau* dynasty, as well as the granddaughter of Charlie Chaplin, the show plays lightly and wittily with stage illusions, veering occasionally into the macabre. (Becket, Mass. 413-243-0745. For a complete schedule, visit www.jacobspillow.org. June 27-July 1. Through Aug. 26.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC CONCERTS IN TOWN

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC: "SUMMERTIME CLASSICS"

The kind of old-time "lollipop" repertory associated with such easygoing events as Arthur Fiedler's Boston Pops concerts lives on at the Phil courtesy of Bramwell Tovey, a skilled and charming conductor-raconteur. June 28 at 7:30 and June 29 at 8: A trio of Johann Strauss II favorites (including the "Fledermaus" Overture and the "Blue Danube" Waltzes) surround Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 1 (with Markus Groh) and his tone poem "Les Préludes." ♦ June 30 at 8 and July 1 at 3: Joyce Yang will be featured in Grieg's Piano Concerto, complementing works by Elgar, Smetana ("The Moldau"), and Rossini (the "William Tell" Overture). ♦ July 3 at 7:30 and July 4 at 3: Tovey, who made his name as an advocate of contemporary music, leads the world première of Kevin Puts's "Two Mountain Scenes" on a program of Americana by Bernstein (the Symphonic Dances from "West Side Story"), Gershwin ("Rhapsody in Blue"), and Sousa. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

BARGEMUSIC

June 27 at 8: The upcoming appearance by the Flux Quartet—renowned for its performances of works by such downtown composers as Morton Feldman and Annie Gosfield—is a testament to the new breadth of programming at the floating chamber-music series. Keeping in mind the barge's traditions, the quartet balances its more daring offerings (Nancarrow's String Quartet No. 3, from 1987, and the world première of a work by the young Israeli composer Yotam Haber) with a modernist classic (Ligeti's beguiling Quartet No. 1, "Métamorphoses Nocturnes") and a rarity by Kurt Weill (his Quartet, Op. 8, from 1923). ♦ June 28 at 8: Another new path at the barge—jazz—is advanced with a concert by the Randy Sandke Jazz Trio. ♦ July 1 at 4: Canada Day is celebrated with a program by a promising young group from the Great White North, the Kirby Quartet, which will perform string quartets by Haydn, Webern, and Beethoven (the Quartet in C Minor, Op. 18, No. 4). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

CHIARA STRING QUARTET

A dynamic young quartet, actively engaged with music old and new, offers a pair of informal "club concerts" this week; its rangy program features not only quartets by Bartók and Beethoven but also a suite of Andean folk tunes and several transcriptions of songs by Prince. (Caffe Vivaldi, 32 Jones St. 212-691-7538. June 28 at 7:30. ♦ Rose Live Music, 345 Grand St., Brooklyn. 718-599-0069. June 29 at 8.)

LUKAS FOSS'S "THE PRAIRIE"

The musical prodigy Lukas Foss arrived in America in 1937 with his family as refugees from fascist Europe. He quickly embraced the musical idioms of his new country—particularly the openhearted popular idiom associated with Copland. His 1944 oratorio, "The Prairie" (a setting of Carl Sandburg's epic poem), was not only a personal breakthrough but one of the most important American works of its time. The Brooklyn Philharmonic—which Foss once served as music director—is reviving the piece in honor of the composer's eighty-fifth birthday, along with a slate of fine vocal soloists (including the soprano Elizabeth Farnum and the tenor Gerard Powers); Mark Mangini conducts. (Rose Theatre, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500. June 28 at 8.)

OUT OF TOWN

MUSIC FROM COPLAND HOUSE: "OUT OF TIME"

In this concert, the superb ensemble performs a piece by its namesake (Copland's late work "Night Thoughts") as well as Messiaen's haunting "Quartet for the End of Time," written during the composer's internment in a German prison camp during the Second World War. Both works (and a piece by Richard Danielpour) are part of a concert that takes place in a gallery of the Neuberger Museum at SUNY Purchase, in which the musicians will be surrounded by "Threnody," a large-scale installation by the artist Cleve Gray. (Purchase, N.Y. 914-251-6100. June 27 at 7:30.)

CARAMOOR

Westchester's smaller, more genteel answer to Tanglewood offers several tracks of varied music running concurrently in repertory-like fashion. June 28 at 7:30: In the first of five string-quartet concerts of the summer, the Formosa Quartet offers works by Debussy and Brahms (the Quartet in B-Flat Major) and the world première of Che-Yen Chen's "Mei Hua," in the lovely Spanish Courtyard. ♦ July 29 at 8: "Sonidos Latinos," a major initiative in support of Hispanic music, begins with a performance of Marco Granados's "Venezuelan Suite," another world première. ♦ July 30: The inaugural "Caramoor Cavalcade," an all-day mini-festival, features a performance of William Walton and Edith Sitwell's "Façade" conducted by Michael Barrett (at 1), a guitar recital by David Leisner (at 3), and another "Sonidos Latinos" event, this one featuring the Orchestra of St. Luke's and the clarinettist Paquito D'Rivera, one of the soloists in the world première of his Concerto for Double Bass, Clarinet/Alto Saxophone, and Orchestra (at 8). (Katonah, N.Y. 914-232-1252.)

TANGLEWOOD

Boston's musical duchy, reinvigorated by the directorship of James Levine, begins with a week of prelude events in advance of the official opening on July 6. June 28-29 at 8:30: Those who loved Mark Morris's recent production of "Orfeo ed Euridice" at the Met can flock northward to see the Mark Morris Dance Group—in collaboration with fellows of the Tanglewood Music Center—perform another immortal opera on a classical theme, Purcell's "Dido and Aeneas." ♦ July 1 at 2:30: Likewise, fans of the Emerson String Quartet's Beethoven series at Carnegie Hall can get a second dose in the Berkshires when the formidable foursome reprises its performances of the Quartets in A Minor, Op. 132, and B-Flat Major, Op. 130 (with the "Grosse Fuge"). (Lenox, Mass. 888-266-1200.)

ASTON MAGNA FESTIVAL

The distinguished festival of Baroque music, a mainstay of summer in the Berkshires, begins its new season with a concert featuring Vivaldi's "Four Seasons" (with the Baroque violinist Stanley Ritchie) at

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Bard College's Olin Hall; Daniel Stepner directs. (Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 845-758-7425. June 29 at 8. ♦ Note: The festival's concerts are repeated in Great Barrington and Williamstown, Mass. For details, see www.astonmagna.org.)

MAVERICK CONCERTS
The Maverick's music director, Alexander Platt, is nothing if not a bold programmer. Two of his favorite composers this summer are Mahler and Corigliano, creators of large canvases whose music will be heard in more intimate contexts. June 30 at 6: The pianists Joel Fan and Pedja Muzijevic play four-hand works by Mozart and Corigliano ("Gazebo Dances") along with Alfredo Casella's enchanting keyboard arrangement of Mahler's Seventh Symphony. ♦ July 1 at 3: The dashing young Calder Quartet, from Los Angeles, performs Corigliano's String Quartet along with works by Mozart and Beethoven (the second "Razumovsky" Quartet). (Woodstock, N.Y. For more information, call 845-679-8217.)

NORFOLK CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL
Star quality will descend on the quietly distinctive grounds of the Stoeckel Estate, where the Yale Summer School of Music is based, as a renowned Norfolk alumnus, Frederica von Stade, offers a proudly Franco-American program of songs by Poulenc, Debussy, Ravel, Copland, Heggie, Rorem, and Sondheim in the Music Shed. (Norfolk, Conn. 860-542-3000. June 30 at 8.)

POP NOTES
THE TENDER TRAP

If you had completely forgotten that André 3000 of OutKast was a rapper, don't feel bad—for a while, he did, too. On the last two OutKast albums, Mr. 3000 spent more time singing loopy meditations on love than he did rhyming; in OutKast's 2006 movie, "Idlewild," he seemed to occupy himself mostly by staring at cuckoo clocks and looking doleful. But André has been inching his way back toward actual rapping, first as a guest on recent party songs by Rich Boy and Devin the Dude, and now on UGK's new single, "Int'l Players Anthem."

At the moment, the best way to experience the song is as a video, which is available on the Internet and cable TV. The mise en scène is a wedding. André, the groom, is in his dressing room, wearing a traditional Scottish kilt, surrounded by friends, including Pimp C and Bun B, of UGK, and his OutKast partner, Big Boi. DJ Paul, from Three 6 Mafia, wonders, fairly, "Why is he dressed like Rowdy Piper?" but Bun B presents the real essay question: "All playing aside, man, why get married, pimpin'—why?" The music, an extensive sample of Willie Hutch's gentle early-seventies soul ballad "I Choose You," begins, and in the phenomenally enunciated manner that permanently complicates the stereotype of a Southern "drawl," André raps about all the girls he has to notify about his upcoming wedding, and all the "pussycat" he's leaving behind for his one true love. He likens his decision to marry to being in a spaceship with no rearview mirror and replays the cynical advice of his friends. The raps by Pimp C and Bun B that follow are, to put it mildly, less romantic, and the final verse, by Big Boi, is somewhat noncommittal. No matter—for a minute, we get André back, and something close to the sequel to OutKast's breakthrough hit, "Ms. Jackson." There, André apologized to a mother for not being able to make a relationship with her daughter work; here, he is finally tying the knot. In both cases, the subtext is really the point: unlike most of his peers and friends, André will talk to a woman as if she were his equal. You may now kiss the rapper.

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*

MUSIC MOUNTAIN
Northwest Connecticut's summer shrine to the string quartet continues its season with a performance by the Shanghai Quartet, four powerful players who specialize in traditional fare. Their program features Mozart's Quartet in F Major, K. 590, Barber's String Quartet (the central movement of which was transcribed as the Adagio for Strings), and Franck's darkly elegant Piano Quintet (with Melvin Chen). (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126. July 1 at 3.)

MOVIES
OPENING

DR. BRONNER'S MAGIC SOAPBOX
A documentary by Sara Lamm about Emanuel Bronner, the amateur philosopher and maker of organic soap. Opening June 29. (Cinema Village.)

EVENING
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening June 29. (In wide release.)

GHOSTS OF CITÉ SOLEIL
A documentary by Asger Leth about Jean-Louis Aristide's private army in Haiti. Opening June 27. (IFC Center.)

IN BETWEEN DAYS
A drama, directed by So Yong Kim, about a teenage Korean girl in a small American city. In Korean and English. Opening June 27. (IFC Center.)

LICENSE TO WED
In this comedy, a priest makes a betrothed couple take a course about marriage. Directed by Ken Kwapis; starring Mandy Moore and Robin Williams. Opening July 3. (In wide release.)

LIVE FREE OR DIE HARD
A sequel to "Die Hard," starring Bruce Willis as a police officer who fights an Internet-based terrorist group. Directed by Len Wiseman. Opening June 27. (In wide release.)

ONE TO ANOTHER
Jean-Marc Barr and Pascal Arnold directed this mystery, about a woman who investigates her brother's murder. In French. Opening June 29. (Quad Cinema.)

RATATOUILLE
An animated comedy, directed by Brad Bird, about a rat in a French bistro who wants to become a chef. With the voices of Patton Oswalt and Peter O'Toole. Opening June 29. (In wide release.)

SICKO
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Lincoln Square.)

VITUS
A Swiss drama, directed by Fredi Murer, about a musical prodigy who rejects his parents' plans for his career. In German. Opening June 29. (Angelika Film Center.)

NOW PLAYING

BROKEN ENGLISH
The writer-director Zoe Cassavetes's idea and cast are so good, it's a shame the results aren't better. An artsy, thirtyish New Yorker, Nora Wilder (Parker Posey), whose name hints at a Hollywood pedigree, is stuck in a dull job and searching for love with a growing desperation. The film's first shots, which daringly reveal Posey's imperfect complexion, promise a bumpy ride through dark nights of the soul, but the bland writing and aimless direction that follow prove as soporific as Nora's nightcap of sleeping pills and vodka. Urged to get married, or even to blind-date, by her mother (the great Gena Rowlands, the filmmaker's real-life mother, who is given sadly little to say or do), Nora cutely meets and quickly falls for a sweet, sincere Frenchman (Melvil Poupaud), who must return to Paris, resulting in all sorts of contrivances. Although the writer-director incidentally lets slip a glimpse of her own movie-family background, as when Nora emerges from a revival house declaring that Humphrey Bogart reminds her of her father, even this majestic backstory remains merely a wink: both Nora Wilder and Zoe Cassavetes labor under the burden of the unexamined life.—*Richard Brody* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

LE DOULOS
In this French gangster drama from 1962, a small-time hood, Maurice Faugel (Serge Reggiani), returns to circulation after four years in jail. While he was away, he missed the emergence of the French New Wave. Apparently, so did the director, Jean-Pierre Melville, who, despite being one of its inspirations, here takes a formulaic approach to a familiar story. Returning to his old gang, Faugel kills another member and gets involved in a new scheme, but when the cops break it up he suspects that they were tipped off by his friend Silien (Jean-Paul Belmondo). Faugel—exactly the kind of genre character that the New Wave filmmakers would have endowed with rich dialogue to evoke his politics, pleasures, and past—is a cipher, and Belmondo gets the kind of one-note role in which he was trapped before Jean-Luc Godard's "Breathless" revealed his wide-ranging talent. Though the plot is twisty and the direction elegant, the entire project exudes an air of willful nostalgia for the way things were just four years earlier. In French.—*R.B.* (Film Forum; June 29-July 12.)

FANTASTIC FOUR:
RISE OF THE SILVER SURFER
While Jessica Alba provides sweet eye candy, it's not enough to buoy interest in this sequel to the 2005 superhero hit. The main story plays as thin as an outline: in between the predictable banter, the gang of four (Alba, Ioan Gruffudd, Chris Evans, and Michael Chiklis) wrestles with the Silver Surfer, an enigmatic, conflicted destroyer of worlds, over the fate of the planet. The film attempts nothing more than to while away the time with cheerful asides and variable special-effects work, but it's so lacking in drama or character development that the film manages to wear out its welcome despite the economical (for a summer blockbuster) ninety-minute running time.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

KNOCKED UP
Ben Stone (Seth Rogen) is a feckless oaf with a wide grin, a bong, and four lazy housemates who are too old to be boys but will never, unless fate takes a hand, bother to grow into men. Fate, however, has plans for Ben, who drunkenly sleeps with a bright, ambitious woman named Alison (Katherine Heigl) and gets her pregnant. If you can accept the premise of Judd Apatow's movie—that Alison would not just keep the baby but ask Ben to become a proper father, with his share of responsibilities—then there is much to relish here. As in Apatow's last picture, "The 40-Year-Old Virgin," the cream of the gags go to supporting players; characters like Alison's unhappy sister (Leslie Mann) and the spiteful colleague (Kristen Wiig) at the TV studio where she works land the sharpest blows. Much of the movie, indeed, slides from the easy laugh to the painful wince; even if you tire of Apatow's vomit jokes, or his teen-age weakness for smut, there are flashes of disarming honesty here from which more earnest films might shy away.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 6/4/07.) (In wide release.)

LADY CHATTERLEY
For those of us who still believe in D. H. Lawrence as a liberator, this awkward, impoverished, and interminable French version of his most notorious work is something of a trial. The writer-director

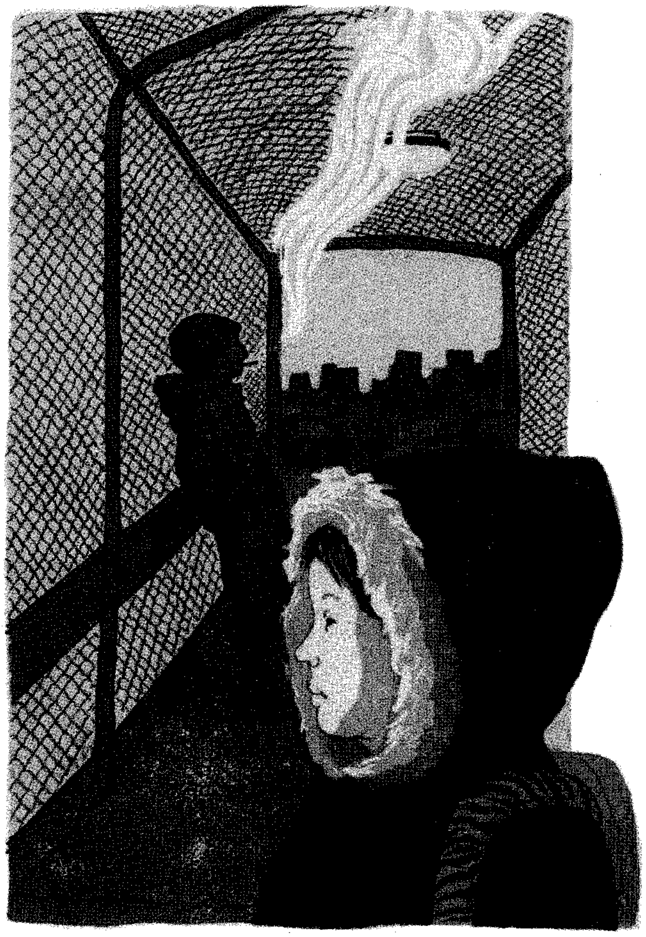
Pascale Ferran chose to use an earlier version of Lawrence's text ("John Thomas and Lady Jane"), which is less verbose than the final version. Done this way, the adulterous Constance Chatterley (Marina Hands) and her gamekeeper lover, Parkin (Jean-Louis Coulloc'h), speak very little. Unfortunately, neither of the actors suggests an inner life. When they finally undress, the nakedness is a relief, since their bodies are so much more expressive than their faces. When they lay flowers on each other's genitals, however, and then dance in the rain, even the most ardent Lawrentians may want to avert their eyes in embarrassment. In French.—*David Denby* (Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

A MIGHTY HEART

In films like "Welcome to Sarajevo" (1997) and "In This World" (2002), the British director Michael Winterbottom has proved himself to be as much a reporter as a fabulist. That mixture carries many risks—are we wise to trust the authenticity of a scene, for instance, just because it is shot with a documentary roughness?—but there are times when its urgency feels indispensable. Such is the case with Winterbottom's new movie, which stars Angelina Jolie as Mariane Pearl, the wife of Daniel Pearl (Dan Futterman). He was kidnapped and then killed in Pakistan in 2002, and most of the story takes place in the dreadful hiatus between those two events. The mood is twitchy, the pace deliberately bewildering, and the moral impetus calculated to leave us of two minds; as the police brutalize a suspect, we both deplore the action and crave the information that it extracts. The greatest surprise is Jolie, who, rather than grandstanding, allows her character to be swept along, and half-swamped, by the horror of those days. With Will Patton, too creepy by half in the role of a security expert.—*A.L.* (6/25/07) (In wide release.)

MR. BROOKS

Just as some men might give in to a hidden taste for pornography, or perhaps for Transcendental Meditation or poetry writing, Mr. Brooks (Kevin Costner), a pillar of the community in Portland, Oregon, is addicted to murder. Every now and then, over a period of years, and with considerable guilt as well as enjoyment, he has gone out at night and committed a perfect crime. He has a superb enabler—an alter ego (William Hurt) whom, for some reason, he calls Marshall and who, sitting in the back of a car or on the side of a room, accompanies him everywhere. Marshall is Mr. Brooks's desire, his madness, and his sanity, too—the part of him that wants to kill people and that also calculates how to avoid getting caught. When Costner and Hurt are fighting with each other, or just chatting, this peculiar thriller, written by Bruce A. Evans and Raynold Gideon and directed by Evans, is witty and fresh. The rest is well made but more conventional.—*D.D.* (6/11 & 18/07) (In wide release.)



"In Between Days," directed by So Yong Kim, opens June 27.

TAEEUN YOO

NANCY DREW

The most precisely targeted film of the season. Where other studio projects are aimed at an elastic range of younger viewers, with a number of sly gags inserted for the pleasure of their parents, Andrew Fleming's movie will appeal only to girls aged between nine and twelve, and perhaps not even to them. Emma Roberts (the niece of Julia, to whom, once she has curled her hair for a party scene, she bears a startling resemblance) stars as Nancy, the supersleuth without a vice in the world. The filmmakers, not wanting the character to seem a prig or a pest, make a joke of her squareness by transplanting her to Los Angeles, where she is described as "a makeover waiting to happen." There are moments when the result feels, quite by accident, like a David Lynch movie waiting to happen; it wavers between stiffness and secrecy, and there is a minor role for Laura Elena Harring, lately of "Mulholland Drive." In the end, however, the plotting is just too slack, and most of the actors switch to hamming mode—though not Roberts, who holds her nerve and plays the innocence straight. With an uncomfortable Tate Donovan as the heroine's father.—*A.L.* (6/25/07) (In wide release.)

LA VIE EN ROSE

This ambitious French bio-pic devoted to the great Edith Piaf is fascinating, exhausting, and overwrought—a death trip. Born in 1915, Piaf (Marion Cotillard) was raised in a brothel, a travelling circus, and the bars and streets of Paris, where she developed the voice—somehow both metallic and throaty, coarse and soulful—that electrified the French and, after the war, the Americans, too. Cotillard gives an amazing performance: frail and, at times, bent (Piaf suffered from arthritis), she can look terrified and vicious simultaneously, and she goes all the way with the writer-director Olivier Dahan's concept, which emphasizes Piaf's suffering as a child and young woman and her monstrousness as an adult. The actual Piaf, who helped Charles Aznavour and Yves Montand when they were young, was generous to the talented; this Piaf is abominably self-centered and often cruel, always alcoholic and frequently drug-addicted. The movie is a remorselessly downbeat version of a gin-and-tears Hollywood bio-pic. With Gerard Depardieu as Piaf's first great patron, Sylvie Testud as a constant friend, Pascal Greggory as her adoring but often abused manager, and the handsome and polite Jean-Pierre Martins as the great love of Piaf's life, the middleweight boxing champion Marcel Cerdan. In French.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

YOU KILL ME

The new film from John Dahl stars Ben Kingsley as Frank, a drunken Polish hit man: an obvious career move for the man who once played Gandhi. Until vodka got the better of him, Frank worked for the Polish Mob in Buffalo; now he is sent to San Francisco to get his life together so he can come back and kill people. It's a tart, misanthropic conceit, and the script, by Christopher Markus and Stephen McFeely, leaves no irony unturned; better still, we get Bill Pullman as Frank's Mephistopheles, a real-estate agent stripped of all illusion, and Téa Leoni (one of the film's executive producers, and the most unsentimental actress in Hollywood) as the lonely cynic to whom our hero turns. Yet their romance seldom rings true, and a pall of indecision hangs over the whole tale; where Dahl's finest work, like "The Last Seduction," cleaves proudly to a genre, this film doesn't know whether it's a Mob thriller, a tar-black comedy, or a grudging lesson in love. Despite the promise concealed in the title, it never slays you. With Luke Wilson as an ex-alcoholic.—*A.L.* (In wide release.)

Also Playing

BLACK SHEEP: Sunshine Cinemas. **EVAN ALMIGHTY:** In wide release. **1408:** In wide release. **STRIKE:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. **SURF'S UP:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—In première. June 28-29 at 7:15 and 9:30, June 30 at 4:45 and 7:15, and July 1 at 4:45, 7:15, and 9:30: "Free Radicals" (2003, Barbara Albert; in German). ♦ June 29 and July 2-3 at 7 and 9 and June 30-July 1 at 5, 7, and 9: "Falling" (2006, Albert).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—Afro-Punk Festival. June 29 at 4:30 and June 30 at 9:30: "Mingus" (1968, Thomas Reichman). ♦ June 29 at 7 and July 3 at 4:30: "Afro-Punk" (2003, James Spooner). ♦ June 29 at 9:45 and July 2 at 9:30: "White Dog" (1982, Samuel Fuller). ♦ June 30 at 4:30: "George Washington" (2000, David Gordon Green). ♦ June 30 at 6:50: "Right On!" (1969, Herbert Danska), followed by a Q. & A. with the producer, Woodie King, Jr., and the director. ♦ July 1 at 2: "The Final Comedown" (1972, Oscar Williams). ♦ July 1 at 4:30: "Still a Brother" (1968, William Greaves). ♦ July 2 at 6:50: "Symbiopsychotaxiplasm Take One" (1968, Greaves), followed by a Q. & A. with the director. ♦ July 3 at 7: "Jimi Plays Monterey" (1985, D. A. Pennebaker, Chris Hegedus, and David Dawkins), followed by a Q. & A. with Pennebaker and Hegedus. ♦ July 3 at 9:40: "UR4 Given" (2004, Cinqué Lee), followed by a Q. & A. with the director.

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. June 29-July 12 at 1:10, 3:20, 5:30, 7:40, and 9:50: "Le Doulos" (†).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—The films of René Clair. July 3 at 12:30, 4, and 7:30: "It Happened Tomorrow" (1944).

IFC CENTER

323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—New York Asian Film Festival. For complete program information, visit www.subwaycinema.com. June 30 at 4: "Trouble Makers" (2006, Cao Baoping; in Mandarin). ♦ July 1 at 1: "Traces of Love" (2006, Kim Dae-sung; in Korean). ♦ In revival. June 29-July 1 at noon: "Wild Strawberries" (1957, Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish). ♦ "Waverly Midnights." June 29-30: "Drawing Restraint 9" (2006, Matthew Barney).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"John Wayne Centenary." June 27 at 6 and June 30 at 6:30: "El Dorado" (1967, Howard Hawks). ♦ June 27 at 8:30: "The Big Trail" (1930, Raoul Walsh). ♦ June 28 at 5:45: "Donovan's Reef" (1963, John Ford). ♦ June 28 at 8:10: "They Were Expendable" (1945, Ford). ♦ June 29 at 6: "The Searchers" (1956, Ford). ♦ "Still Moving." June 27 at 6:30 and June 30 at 4: "The Marrying Kind" (1952, George Cukor). ♦ June 28 at 6: "Peg o' My Heart" (1922, King Vidor; silent). ♦ June 29-30 at 6: "Near Dark" (1987, Kathryn Bigelow). ♦ June 29 at 8 and June 30 at 2: "Morocco" (1930, Josef von Sternberg). ♦ July 1 at 2: "The White Rose" (1923, D. W. Griffith; silent). ♦ July 2 at 7:30: "The Avenging Conscience" (1914, Griffith; silent). ♦ The films of Mahamat Saleh Haroun. June 30 at 2: "Kalala" (2005; in Chadian Arabic and French). ♦ June 30 at 4: "Abouna" (2002). ♦ "MOMA Laffs." July 1 at 2: "Modern Times" (1936, Charles Chaplin). ♦ Films from the Jean Desmet collection. July 2 at 6: "A Welcome Intruder" (1913, Griffith; silent) and "Terra Promessa" (1913, Baldassarre Negroni; silent).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"It's Only a Movie: Horror Films from the 1970s and Today." June 30 at 2: "It's Alive" (1974, Larry Cohen), followed by a Q. & A. with the director. ♦ July 1 at 4:30: "Rabid" (1977, David Cronenberg). ♦ In preview. July 1 at 2: "Molière" (2007, Laurent Tirard; in French).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—"30 Years of Kino International." June 29 at 2 and June 30 at 6:30: "Les Bonnes Femmes" (1960, Claude Chabrol; in French). ♦ June 29 at 4, June 30 at 1:30, and July 3 at 3:45: "The Great Dictator" (1940, Charles Chaplin). ♦ June 29 at 7: "Spies" (1928, Fritz Lang; silent). ♦ June 30 at 8:30 and July 2 at 4:15: "Fallen Angels" (1995, Wong Kar-Wai; in Cantonese). ♦ July 1 at 1 and July 2 at 6:15: "Old Joy" (2006, Kelly Reichardt). ♦ July 1 at 7:10 and July 2 at 1: "Time Regained" (1999, Raoul Ruiz; in French). ♦ July 3 at 8:30: "Pandora's Box" (1929, G. W. Pabst; silent).

READINGS AND TALKS

92ND STREET Y
The food historian and cookbook author Francine Segan discusses the history and lore of aphrodisiacs. Refreshments will be served. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. June 27 at 6:30.)

HAPPY ENDING MUSIC AND READING SERIES
On the second and fourth Wednesday of each month, the curator, Amanda Stern, organizes programs mandating that writers and musicians "take one public risk" (such as revealing their PIN numbers or playing a tricky cover song). On June 27 at 8, the series closes for the season with an appearance by the short-story writer Jean Thompson, the graphic novelist Alison Bechdel, and the poet and journalist Eliza Griswold. The literary-leaning band One Ring Zero will also be on hand. (Happy Ending Lounge, 302 Broome St. No tickets necessary.)

"SUNDAYS AT SUNNY'S"
The novelists Joshua Ferris, George Hagen, and Helen Schulman gather for an afternoon reading in Brooklyn. (253 Conover St., Red Hook. July 1 at 3. For more information, call Book Court, at 718-875-3677.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

SUNSET ECOTOURS
There are a number of opportunities, especially in the summer, for the tourist (or resident, for that matter) to go on an evening cruise of the harbor and take in views of the city. One such tour, offered by New York City Audubon, has a slightly different approach. It send boats with guides up the East River to see herons and egrets. Thousands of the birds nest in large numbers on the islands off our shores. Who knew? (June 30 at 7:30 and Saturdays through Aug. 13. For more information, call 212-742-1969 or visit www.nycaudubon.org.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
Disasters, unfortunately, make riveting copy. So it's not surprising that many of the top lots in **Christie's** sale of ocean-liner posters and miscellanea, including ship models and decorative items (June 28), bear the names of some of the greatest maritime debacles of the last century, including that of the Titanic. She is represented here by a list of her first-class passengers (which features two pages of helpful information on such subjects as table seatings, telegrams, and pets) as well as a handwritten account of the ship's final moments by Laura Marie Cribb, a shop assistant from Newark who was rescued at sea; her father, a fellow-passenger, was not so lucky. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ **Phillips** closes out the season with two selling exhibitions, both running through June 30: one spanning thirty years of work by the enigmatic New York artist Daniel Brush and the other of coolly satirical photographs of television images by the Belgian Harry Gruyaert (from "TV Shots"). (450 W. 15th St. 212-940-1200.)

The guitarist Jason Vieaux, at the Maverick Concerts.

JASHAR AWAN

ON THE HORIZON

ART
SHOW SHUFFLE
July 18-Oct. 28

The Studio Museum in Harlem rolls over its slate of gallery shows later this month, bringing in an exhibit on the Tanzanian-born British architect David Adjaye's public buildings, photographs by New York-area high-school students who have been studying James VanDerZee, and the fruits of a year's labors from Titus Kaphar, Wardell Milan, and Demetrius Oliver, the museum's current artists-in-residence. (212-864-4500.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
METHENY MOOD
July 21

The split program offered by the guitarist Jason Vieaux at the Maverick Concerts reflects the inclusive spirit of the Woodstock area: the first half features works by Bach and by Spanish composers, followed by Vieaux's tribute to the jazz-guitar legend Pat Metheny. (845-679-8217.)

THE THEATRE
HOPELESSLY DEVOTED
July 24

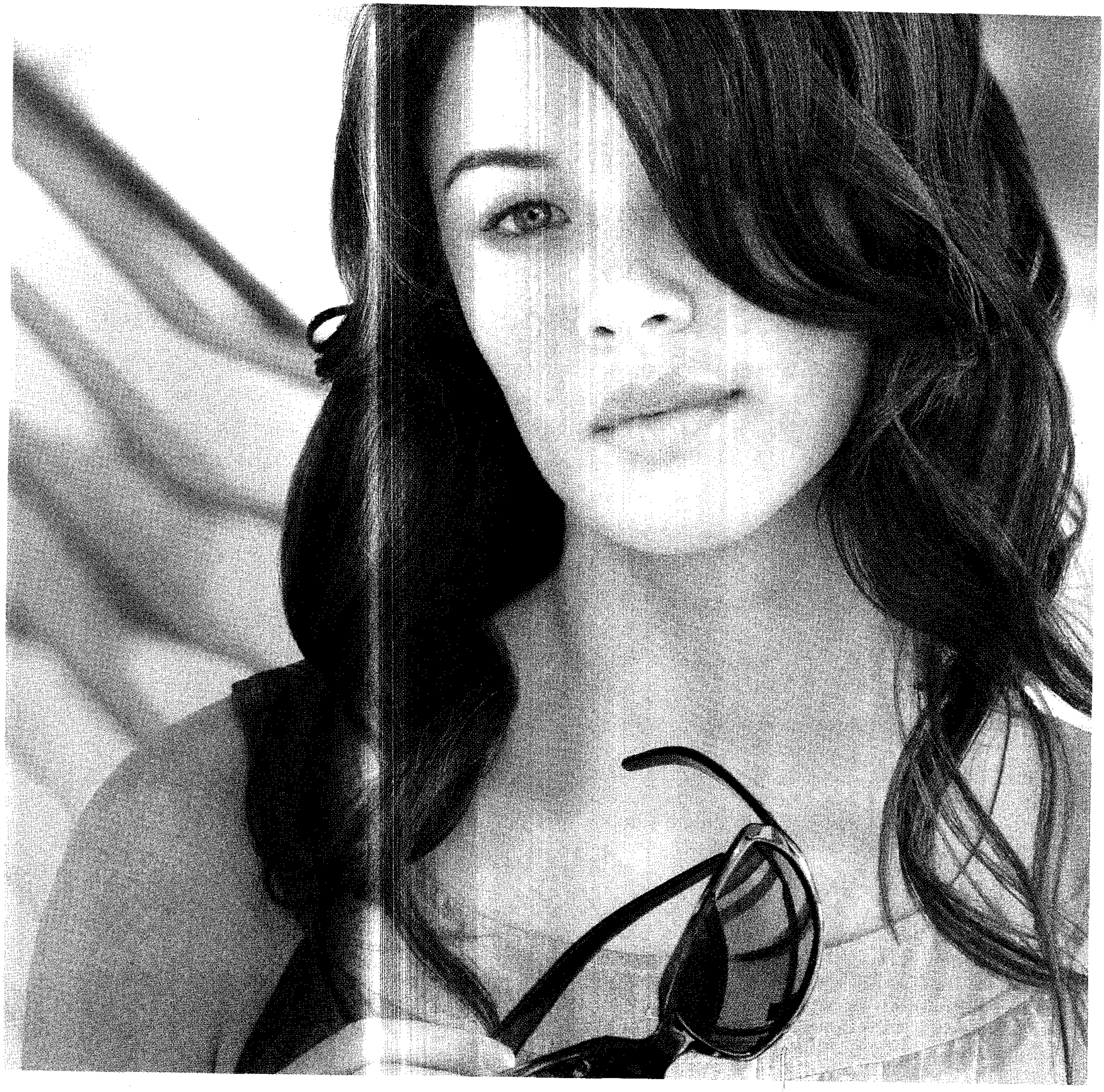
"Grease," the quintessential musical about the fifties, starts previews at the Brooks Atkinson Theatre, starring Max Crumm and Laura Osnes, both of whom were cast after winning a prime-time reality-TV contest called "Grease: You're the One That I Want." The Broadway veteran Kathleen Marshall ("The Pajama Game") choreographs and directs. (212-307-1400.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND
ENTER THE DRAGONS
Aug. 4-5

Forty-foot-long, two-thousand-pound teak boats decorated with a dragon's head at the bow, a dragon's tail at the stern, and red, green, and blue scales, take to the waters of Flushing Meadows Corona Park, continuing a tradition that dates back thousands of years. (www.hkdbf-ny.org.)

NIGHT LIFE
NO SLEEP
Aug. 8-9

Still going strong after more than two decades, the Beastie Boys have a new album, an all-instrumental collection called "The Mix-Up," and two shows in New York, one in Central Park on Aug. 8 and one the next night at McCarren Park Pool, in Brooklyn. (212-307-7171.)



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When did you realize that you were pretty good at hitting a baseball?

AARON: Early on, some of my teammates were always quizzing me about why. I knew I was blessed in a way, and I put a lot into it, more than just the average player. No matter if I had four hits the night before, I still thought I had to do better the next day.

What are the keys to being a great hitter?

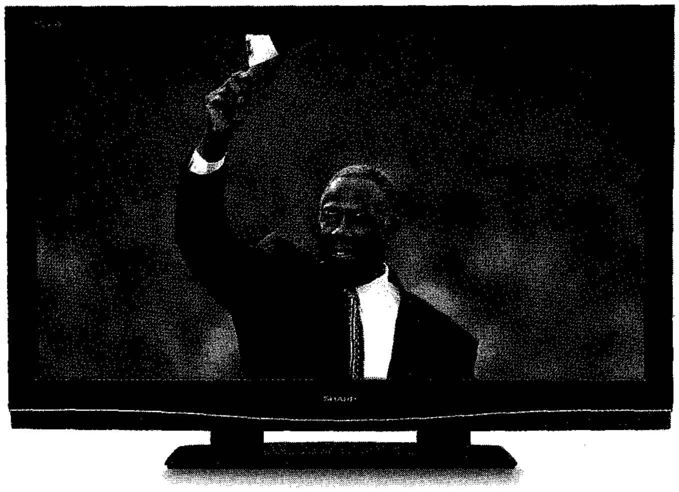
AARON: Vision is the first thing—you have to have good eyesight to hit a baseball coming in at ninety miles an hour or even faster; but then you need discipline at the plate. You have to know what you are looking for and know it when you see it and then you have to hit it. Hard. Players that hit .230 think they can hit some pitcher's fastball and then try to adjust to a curve ball, and they foul it off. Most of your good hitters—a Ted Williams, a Stan Musial, myself, Willie Mays—when we were looking for a pitch we wanted and we got it, we hit it, and we were able to keep it between the white lines, or outta the ballpark. That's the difference between hitting .230 and .330.

The Hank Aaron Award is given every year to the best offensive player in both leagues. What does it mean to have it in your name?

AARON: I am very impressed with the ballplayers today. To be honest, they do some things that we weren't able to do in our day. Whether because of the Minor League system or college ball or the guys coming from the international leagues, they swing the bat like veterans, they act like veterans, they handle themselves like veterans. It's an honor to have one of today's players get the Hank Aaron Award.

Today, as a busy baseball executive, are you able to keep up with the game?

AARON: I watch some baseball on TV, mostly the Braves®, of course. But I did watch that Japanese kid [Red Sox® pitcher Daisuke Matsuzaka] in his first game recently—everybody wanted to see *him* pitch. I think we are very blessed to have the talent that so many of these young guys exhibit today. It's a joy to watch.



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TOP LEFT: FIRST SHARP TV ©SHARP ELECTRONICS; HANK AARON INSET ©1954 NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY/GETTY IMAGES; BOTTOM RIGHT: AARON IN 2002 ©JEFF HAYNES/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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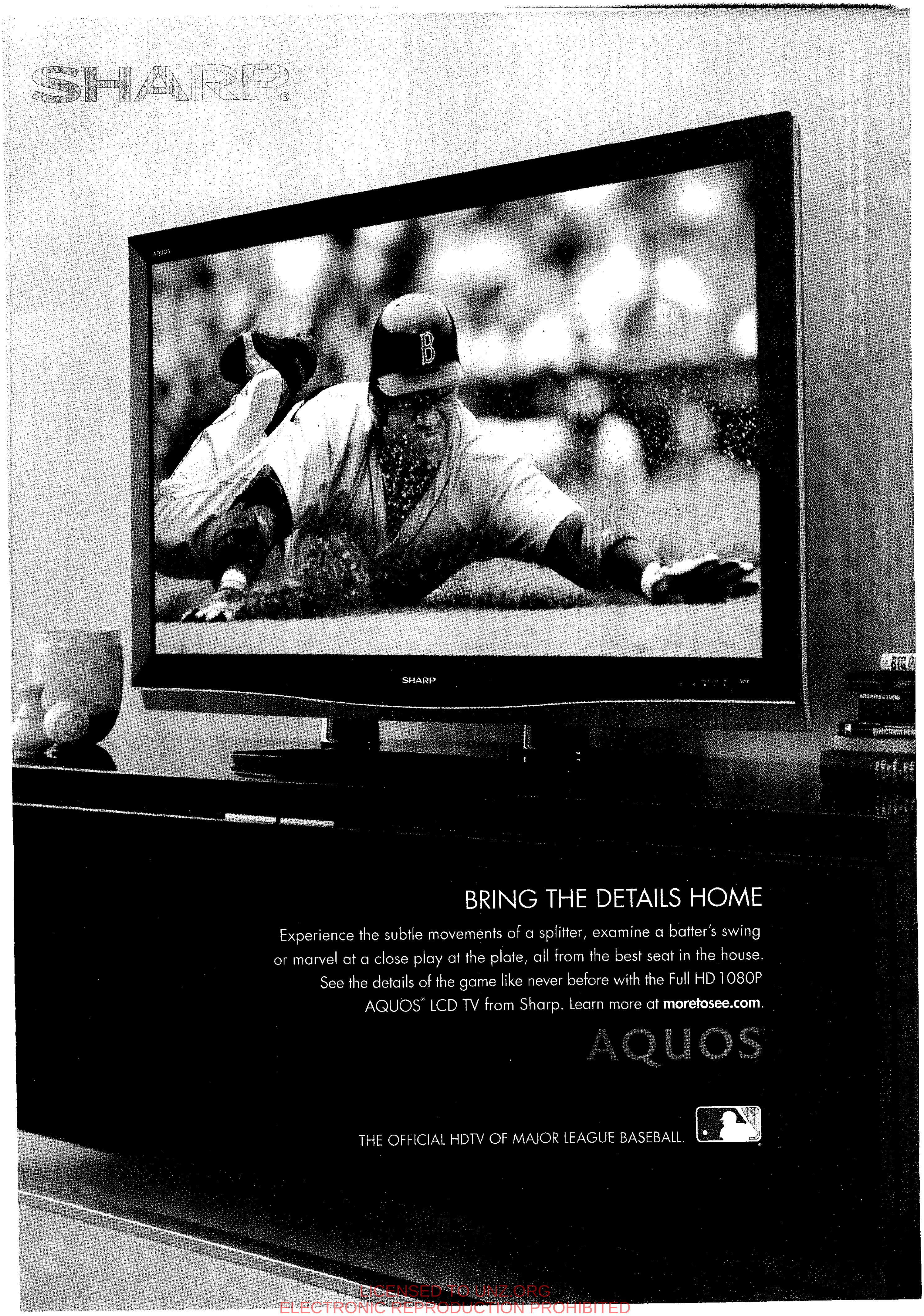

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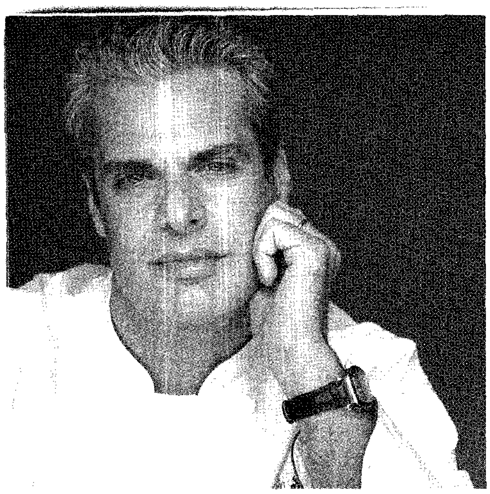

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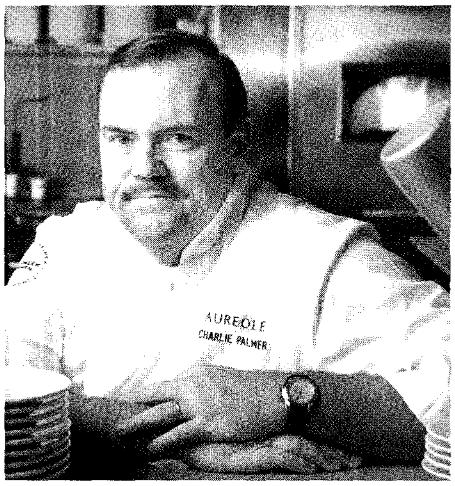

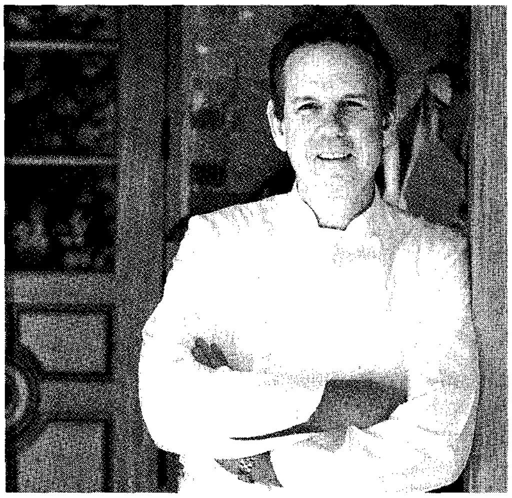

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THE
NEW YORKER

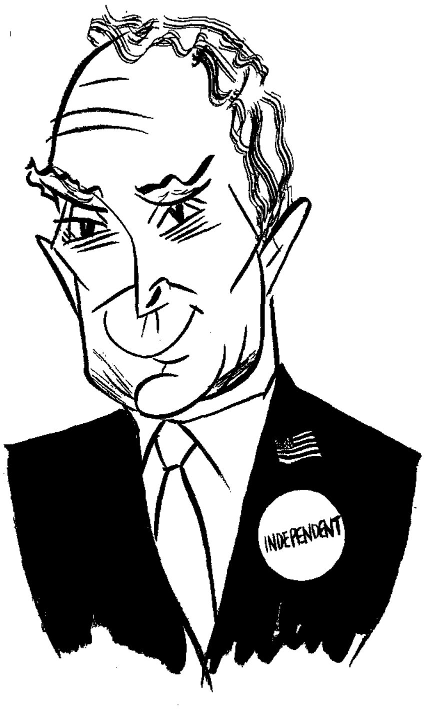
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
MR. INDEPENDENT

In the quaint and yet periodically relevant terms of the Gilded Age, Mayor Michael Bloomberg is a captain of industry who turned into a Mugwump. With Bloomberg L.P., his empire of "financial information services," he has become the forty-fourth richest person in America, worth at least five and a half billion dollars. But unlike the financial titans of the late nineteenth century, who made it a business practice to buy mayors (and governors and legislators), Bloomberg instead bought the mayoralty, spending almost a hundred and sixty million dollars of his own money on his two winning campaigns. Then, unlike the robber barons, who corrupted public officeholders to serve private or party interests, the Bloomberg administration has generally offered a model of nonpartisan good government, which was the ideal of that circle of disenchanted old-money Republicans whom Party stalwarts mockingly called Mugwumps, after the Algonquian word *muggumquomp*—meaning "war leader," or "kingpin."

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

In the Presidential election of 1884, the Mugwumps, fed up with corruption at the city, state, and national levels, refused to support the Republican machine candidate, James Blaine—a move that may have tilted the race to the Democratic winner, Grover Cleveland. Last week, Bloomberg ended his affiliation with the Republican Party, as he did seven years ago with the Democratic Party (thereby changing his political registration as many times as Hillary Clinton has had a geographical makeover and Rudolph Giuliani has torn up his marriage license). If Bloomberg's media tease turns into the full-blown affair of an independent Presidential campaign, who would benefit? New York, for starters. Or, at least, the glittering constellation of news and entertainment companies, Wall Street firms, political consultants, civic boosters, paid gossips, columnists, pundits, publicists, and solipsists who feed—and in turn batten on—the impression that unless something happens in New York it doesn't happen. Not even a Subway Series would exalt the city and annoy St. Louis or Boston quite as much as a three-way Presidential race between a senator, a mayor, and an ex-mayor from New York. The closest sports analogy might be the 1951 baseball playoff between the Brooklyn Dodgers and the New York Giants (decided by Bobby Thomson's "shot heard 'round the world") for the right to lose to the Yankees in the World Series. But that comparison, too, falls short.



The forty per cent of the American electorate who regard themselves as Independents would also benefit. Their number has been growing in recent years, and they are increasingly joined in political sympathy by Republicans and Democrats who find their parties captive to a base, fringe, or interest group with which they have little in common. We are living through one of those recurring moments—1912, 1980, and 1992 were others—when disgust with the two big parties stirs a longing for an outsider of upright character, untainted by dirty money or political dealmaking. (Barack Obama and Giuliani are trying with some success to play the role from inside the parties, which might encourage Bloomberg to stay out.) This longing is almost always based on the illusion that compromise is separable from power, that political innocence should be the main qualification for office. The candidates Eugene Debs, John Anderson, and Ross Perot would probably not be remembered as stellar Presidents, but they forced both the Democrats and the Republicans to take public disillusionment more seriously. Bloomberg's candidacy as a plain-speaking manager—and one who is socially liberal, fiscally competent, and temperamentally reassuring—would appeal to the millions of voters who are heartily sick of the spectacle of the permanent American campaign.

The last seven elected Presidents have come from the South or the West, making it almost an article of faith that no one from the Northeast (see under: Dukakis, Kerry) has a chance to win, or should even be considered American. This remarkable streak resulted from demographic change, the switch of the South from Democratic to Republican, and an ersatz populism perfected by millionaire politicians and encouraged by television. If a five-foot-seven divorced Jew with a nasal whine is taken seriously as a Presidential candidate, it would at the very least diminish the power of faux symbols in our political life; and a Clinton-Giuliani-Bloomberg race would so thoroughly explode the Sun Belt's lock on the White House that an entirely new kind of politics might be possible, in which evolution is not at issue, no one has to pretend to like pork rinds, and the past tense of "drag" is "dragged." It would also mark the end of New York's longtime estrangement from the rest of the country and complete its post-September 11th return to being the great American city. After which Americans could start to resent New York again.

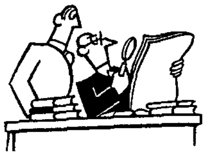
If Bloomberg runs, he might reach into his wallet for up to a half billion dollars, which lies somewhere between pocket change and a fairly large chunk of his fortune. The non-stop fund-raising that candidates for every office in Washington are obliged to do is degrading as well as corrupting, and it's unlikely that legislation will ever stanch the money flow, because so few incumbents ever want to back it. Short of public financing, though, it is better for candidates to have to raise money from others—especially now that the Web and grassroots efforts have greatly increased the power of smaller donations—than to be able to buy the White House through their own business success. However well Bloomberg has run New York City or would run the United States, his money would be a profoundly undemocratic force in public life. The argument that it insulates him from the legal bribery of fund-raising glosses over the fact that billionaires have an impressive track record of venality. The White House should be available to human frailty in all tax brackets.

After Bloomberg's announcement, Giuliani supporters were quick to underplay his success as mayor. Fred Siegel, a sometime Giuliani adviser and an admiring biographer, told the *Times*, "Bloomberg's biggest accomplishments are not to screw up Giuliani's legacy," and on the *New Republic* Web site Siegel portrayed New York as a city kept prosperous and happy largely by Bloomberg's personal spending. The spasm of panic from the Giuliani camp seems justifiable, since he and Bloomberg could end up in a scramble over the votes of moderate Republicans, but at the top of the list of those who would not benefit from a Bloomberg candidacy has to be Hillary Clinton. The 2008 election is the Democrats' to lose, because Independents are moving their way. Some voters in both groups—especially the latter—might be tempted to leave behind the twenty rancorous years of Clintons and Bushes, to start fresh with a candidate who seems to have very little baggage other than an impressive record as mayor and suitcases full of money.

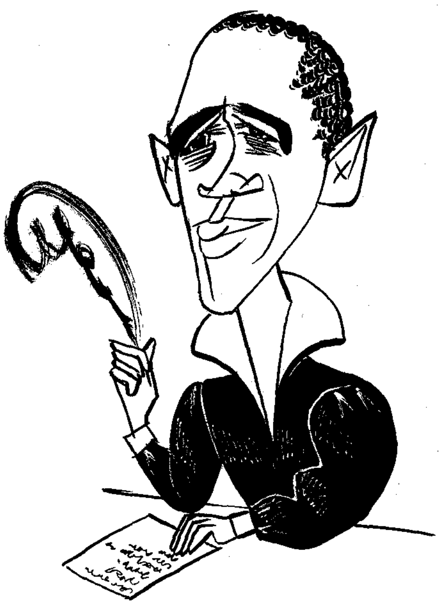
—*George Packer*

ROSES ARE RED

OBAMA, POET



In his first book, "Dreams from My Father," Barack Obama described the marijuana that he smoked as a young man as "something that could flatten out the landscape of my heart, blur the edges of my memory." This confession of youthful indiscretion was at once more sober and more lyrical than those proffered by Presidents Forty-two ("I didn't inhale") and Forty-three ("When I was young and irresponsible, I was young and irresponsible"), and it comes as little surprise to discover that another, less publicized intoxication to which the young Obama succumbed was the composition of lyric poetry.



Barack Obama

In 1981, *Feast*, a literary magazine produced at Occidental College, published two poems by Obama, who was then a student there. The first, "Pop," appears to be a loving if slightly jaded portrait of Obama's maternal grandfather, with whom he spent a large part of his childhood. Free in structure and with a bold use of enjambment, it begins, "Sitting in his seat, a seat broad and broken/In, sprinkled with ashes,/Pop switches channels, takes another/Shot of Seagrams, neat, and asks/What to do with me, a green young man/Who fails to consider the/Flim and flam of the world, since/Things have been easy for me." The second, "Underground," offers a vivid if obscurely symbolic description of a tribe of submarine primates. An exemplary few lines go, "Under water grottos, caverns/Filled with apes/That eat figs./Stepping on the figs/That the apes/Eat, they crunch."

Harold Bloom, who in fifty-three years of teaching literature at Yale University has had many undergraduate poems pressed hopefully upon him, said, when reached by telephone in New Haven last week, that he was not familiar with Obama's œuvre. But after studying the poems he said that he was not unimpressed with the young man's efforts—at least, by the standards established by other would-be bards within the political sphere. "At eighteen, as an undergraduate, he was already a much better poet than our former Secretary of Defense William Cohen, who keeps publishing terrible poetry," Bloom said. (Cohen has published two collections of verse: "Of Sons and Seasons," in 1978, and "A Baker's Nickel," in 1986.) "And then there is Jimmy Carter, who is in my judgment literally the worst poet in the United States." (Carter's first volume of poetry, "Always a Reckoning and Other Poems," which was published in 1994, included a work called "Why We Get Cheaper Tires from Liberia": "No churches can be built/no privy holes or even graves/dug in the rolling hills/for those milking Firestone's trees, who die/from mamba and mosquito bites.")

Of the two Obama poems, Bloom said, "Pop" was "not bad—a good enough folk poem with some pathos and humor and affection." He went on, "It is not wholly unlike Langston Hughes, who tended to imitate Carl Sandburg." Bloom was fascinated by Obama's use of an unusual verb, "shink" ("He . . . Stands, shouts, and asks/For a hug, as I shink, my/Arms barely reaching around/His thick, oily neck"), a word that does not appear in any of the dictionaries that Bloom consulted but which is defined in an online slang dictionary as "an evasive sinking maneuver."

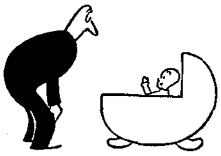
"It undoubtedly was a word that was in common usage, having to do with feeling very strong emotion, in this case a very strong need for comfort," Bloom said. He takes the subtext of the poem to be Obama's reckoning with his absent father, for whom his grandfather is, inevitably, an inadequate substitute. "This is, in effect, his own father," Bloom said. "That's very touching, and it also shows a kind of humane and sad wit. There's a mind there." "Underground," Bloom said, is the better poem of the two. "It gave me the oddest feeling that he might have been reading the poems of D. H. Lawrence—it reminded me of the poem 'Snake,' " Bloom went on. "I think it is about some sense of chthonic forces, just as Lawrence frequently is—some sense, not wholly articulated, of something below, trying to break through."

Poetry aside, Bloom has formed a good impression of Obama—"Though if Mayor Bloomberg runs, I am voting for him," he added. In any case, he said, Obama has chosen the right career, at least if it comes to a tossup between politico and poet. "If I had been shown these poems by one of my undergraduates and asked, Shall I go on with it?, I would have rubbed my forehead and said, On the whole, my dear, probably not. Your future is not as a person of letters," Bloom pronounced. "But they would by no means have seemed to me unworthy of my attention."

—*Rebecca Mead*

DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME

MAKING THE MANNY

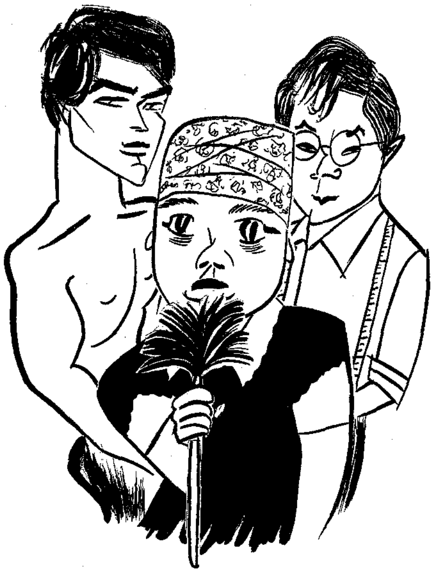


Last summer, Jay Peterson and Holly Peterson, first cousins and best friends, were sitting on the beach in Southampton when an idea struck. Holly had just turned in a draft of a novel, called "The Manny," about a rich New York family that hires a musclebound male nanny to free Dad (he's busy), amuse Mom (she's bored), and teach their son, Dylan (he's sort of a weenie), how to be a dude. "I had always sent Holly these irreverent, un-P.C. Internet videos, like 'Dick in a Box,' and 'Lazy Sunday,' and Holly said, 'We have to do one of those for "The Manny"!' " Jay, a film and television producer, who, with Michael Jaffe, co-wrote and directed the video, recently recalled. Last week, on YouTube, their very own short had its début. Making "The Manny" wasn't exactly fooling around with the family Super 8, although Holly's father, the financier Pete Peterson, was persuaded to lend his ten-room River House apartment, which served as the movie's set.

"I told him, 'We're doing a little video production—you don't mind, do you, just during the day?' " Holly, who is forty-two and a contributing editor at *Newsweek*, said. (In May, Pete, who earned $1.9 billion last week, when his company, the Blackstone Group, went public, bought a duplex at 810 Fifth Avenue from David Geffen for $37.5 millon.) Billed as a satire, the project, which ended up taking two weeks to shoot, features R-rated dialogue ("He can bang all day," one character says of the manny), broad takes on race and class ("Got a driver from Jamaica, a tailor from Hong Kong, got a super from Rica, and a maid named Wong," another character raps), a montage of cheesecake cameos from a cast of Upper East Side socialites, and, in the role of the child, a thirty-three-year-old dwarf. If "This Is Spinal Tap" was a mockumentary, "The Manny" could be called a mock-mockumentary—a parody that attempts to inoculate against criticism, without inflicting too much (intentional) damage on the group it purports to send up. But, as Karl Rove's hip-hop performance at the Radio and Television Correspondents' Association dinner demonstrated, laughing at yourself can be a tricky business.

To portray the pinched corporate husband, the cousins called an actor friend. The comedy troupe Upright Citizens Brigade furnished players for the maid, colonic doctor, and superintendent roles, while the nanny characters, who had ethnic specifications ("Got a nanny from Manila/another from Peru," goes the lyric), were recruited from Craigslist, at a rate of two hundred dollars each. Karen Duffy, a former MTV v.j., and a friend of Holly's, played the mother.

As for the gang of uptown "girls" (this breed of woman seeks not only cosmetic but etymological eternal youth), who function as a kind of pedicured Greek chorus, Holly wanted authenticity. "I first asked a few of my friends who are pretty Upper East Side moms, but more just to let them know I thought they were yummy mummies," Holly said. "I knew they would never do it." She ended up drafting acquaintances: Eva Jeanbart-Lorenzotti, Cristina Greeven Cuomo, Jennifer Creel, and Tinsley Mortimer, whom she compensated with candles and snakeskin clutches from Bergdorf. "One of the very first things we decided was that we had to get the real girls to play themselves. It's much funnier, and then you have the Page Six vector coming into play. Upper East Side girls"—Holly qualifies as one, living on Park Avenue, with her husband, an investment banker; three children; and staff, the exact number of whom she refused to specify—"are such a particular breed. They're dripping with style. It's impossible for anyone to copy that look." Holly appears in the video as a naughty nurse.



The cast of "The Manny"

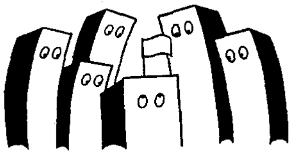
"We were trying to push some edges," Holly said. "If it weren't for Holly's book being associated with a publisher and all that, we might have pushed it even further and had more curse words," Jay said. One particularly risqué segment posed a personnel problem more pressing than a potential shunning at Shinnecock. "The kid, Dylan, was either going to hump a chair or hump the nanny's leg," Holly said. "As a mother, I wasn't going to ask my kids or my friends' kids to do that." Hence, the dwarf. Jay recalled, "We thought, Why don't we hire a little person? That should get some good laughs."

Jason Heyman, who ended up playing Dylan and is a member of a heavy-metal tribute band called Mini KISS, had never heard of a manny before showing up at River House for the shoot. "I just knew it was a Spanish nickname," he said. "But then they explained to me that they're just trying to make the male-nanny concept familiar to the regular people. Everybody's doing the manny thing now." Heyman is pleased with the final product. ("Great job!" he wrote on Holly's MySpace page.)

Pete Peterson has been trying to distance himself from the video, saying last week via e-mail that he would never have agreed to lend his apartment had he known that "The Manny" was going to be filmed there, rather than, as he thought, a taped interview of his daughter. Neither Holly nor Jay is overly bothered by complaints that the video possesses a certain let-them-eat-cake quality. (On YouTube, viewer comments like "Holly, this rocks!" are interspersed with posts like "Wow, just incredibly tacky and unfunny, not to mention racist.") "I'm fine with that," Jay said, "because at the end of the day you can only do it for people in your world, and most people in our world find it funny."

—Lauren Collins

ODD JOBS
PLACE IN THE SUN



Building booms keep a lot of people busy—community boards, scaffolding specialists. They also provide a boost to the shadow business. Michael Kwartler runs a nonprofit organization called the Environmental Simulation Center, which makes shadow studies, disclosure documents required for buildings that could block sunlight near parks or historic places. He has worked on three of the city's biggest new projects: Atlantic Yards, in Brooklyn; the rebuilding of the World Trade Center area; and the West Side tract known as Hudson Yards—this last being "the mother of all shadow studies," Kwartler said recently.

Kwartler, a diminutive man with a blond mustache, was taking a stroll by one of his latest commissions, a building going up on a lot just south of Madison Square Park. (He works for everybody—developers, activists, city agencies.) It was a sunny day, and Kwartler was wearing light-adjusting glasses. In the park, a crowd was lined up in the speckled light next to Shake Shack, Danny Meyer's hamburger stand. "By now, the shadows have pretty much receded from the park," Kwartler said, looking around. "If you came in March, it would be colder, and there might be more people sitting on the benches in the sun. But right now there isn't a discernible pattern, except for the sunbathers"—a group of shirtless men near the fountain, reading magazines.

In 1990, the Parks Council asked Kwartler, who was then an architect and urban planner with a thing for solar-heated houses, to come up with a plan for shadow-sensitive zoning. (According to the city's building codes, a shadow is "a circumstance in which a building or other built structure blocks the sun from the land"—not the same thing as shade, which is caused by trees.) Kwartler started by mapping the shadows that already existed. He made digital models of buildings around city parks. Then, using software called a ray-tracer, he created images that simulated the sun's light during the seasons when it makes the biggest difference—late fall and early spring. After several months, Kwartler's company had produced a 3-D map charting the movement of most of the park-area shadows in the city.

Kwartler's goal is to inspire an ordinance along the lines of the Japanese Nisshoken, or Right to Sunshine Law, or England's Law of Ancient Lights. "The British are fabulous," he said. "They've had this rule, I think, since the time of William the Conqueror. It's based on the common-law idea that if something has been happening for a period of time we have a right to keep it that way. So if I've had access to sunlight for a certain amount of time that we all agree to, then beyond that point you can't take away my sunlight. Right? But we can negotiate, so if you want to pay me for the lost sunlight we could work out a deal."

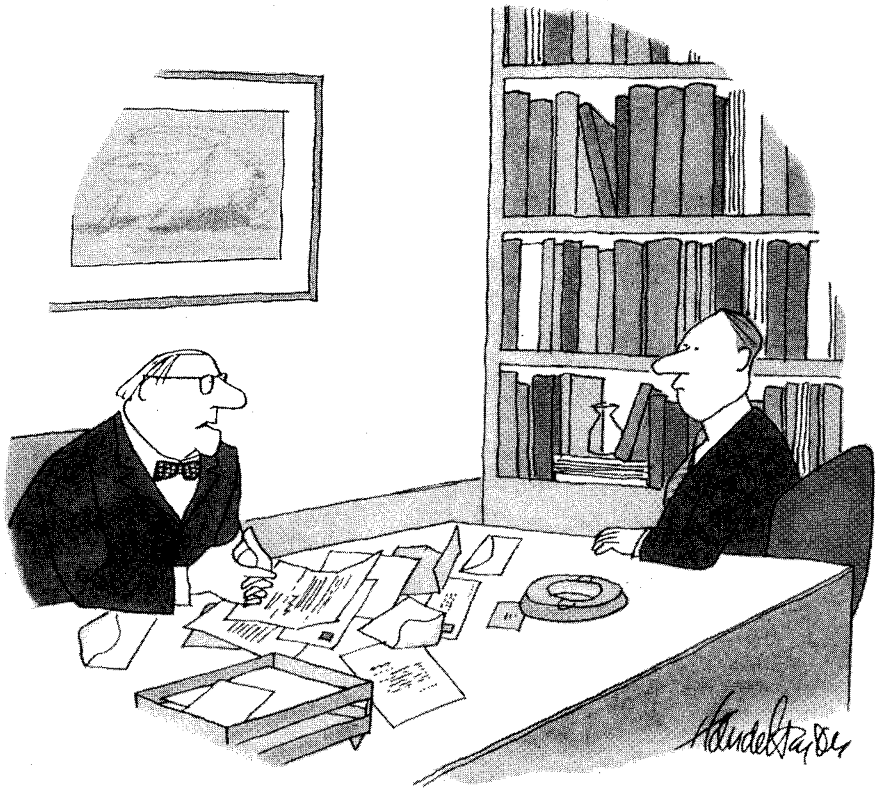
Kwartler calls his plan the "sunshine zoning proposal." It draws on another British legal principle, the "grumble line," which refers to the point at which an occupant starts to complain that his home is not getting enough light. Kwartler came up with a standard called the "green line": the city will decide on the maximum level of shadow that it is willing to allow in a park, and that becomes the basis for zoning regulations. The city has not accepted Kwartler's system so far, but he considers it an improvement on the shadow activism of groups like the Municipal Arts Society, which, in the nineteen-eighties, protested a proposed tower by the architect Moshe Safdie by covering the portions of Central Park they claimed would be thrown into shadow with black umbrellas. (Kwartler called their tactics "just hokey.")

Kwartler stopped across the street from the construction site: at the outset of the project, the developers had asked him to compare the shadow cast by a low, squat building with that cast by a tall, skinny building that had the same square footage. "It's kind of counterintuitive," he said. "Everybody likes to say that a tall, skinny building is going to have the worst shadow. But actually a low building is the one whose shadow is going to last the longest." In Kwartler's model, the tall tower's shadow creeps across the southeast corner of the park at 10 A.M. Shortly before noon, like the line cast by a sundial, it falls briefly on the crowds in front of Shake Shack, before moving east toward Madison Avenue. "It's almost like Einstein," he said. "The two shadows start at the same time, but this one is moving faster at a much greater distance." With his advice, the developers decided to build a tall, skinny building.

"Lecturing about shadows?" a voice behind Kwartler said. It was an architect friend who had been on her way to Shake Shack with her husband. Kwartler advised them to skip the line and get takeout from a place nearby. After they left, he said, "I don't think too many people would be waiting in line here if there was a low, squat building across the street. You'd be standing in its shadow. There wouldn't be any warmth on your body." It was a hot day, though, so when the architect and her husband returned with sandwiches they found a spot in the shade.

—*Lizzie Widdicombe*

POSTSCRIPT



"You have a pretty good case, Mr. Pitkin. How much justice can you afford?"

HANDELSMAN, 12/24/1973

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The cartoonist J. B. Handelsman—John Bernard at birth, and Bud thereafter—died last week, at the age of eighty-five, leaving a legacy of nearly a thousand *New Yorker* cartoons (and five covers), published between 1961 and last fall. The legacy has as much to do with writing as it does with drawing—Handelsman may be better known for his captions than for the cartoons. (He also published three humor pieces that incorporated drawings, and, in *Punch,* for eleven years he wrote a regular illustrated feature called "Freaky Fables.") He wasn't a polemicist, but his work was concerned with politics and history and the range of our folly, from mere foibles to gross inhumanity. "Sometimes something historical gives you a better perspective," he said in a 1980 interview. "You can see the latest dumbness as just the end of a long line of dumbnesses that have been taking place for thousands of years." He saw not just the passing parade—though he did keep a sharp eye on that, believing, as he did, that cartooning was a form of journalism—but the deep, timeless politics that color, if not define, human relations (think bosses and secretaries, generals and underlings, senators and constituents, wives and husbands, judges and defendants). That's not to say that he didn't appreciate nonsense, or wasn't up to the minute: in a drawing from 1995, a little girl comes home and reports to her parents, "I lost the spelling bee on the word 'gangsta.' " But a Handelsman caption was more likely to refer to Schopenhauer, Zeus, Romulus, Rousseau, Epithemius, Dickens, or the Constitution. And still be funny. He was angry about many things, unfairness and hypocrisy being very near the top of the list. In a cartoon from fifteen years ago, Handelsman drew the Statue of Liberty lifting her torch in one hand and holding a portable phone with the other. Into the phone she says, skeptically, "Well, it all depends. Where are these huddled masses coming from?"

—*Nancy Franklin*

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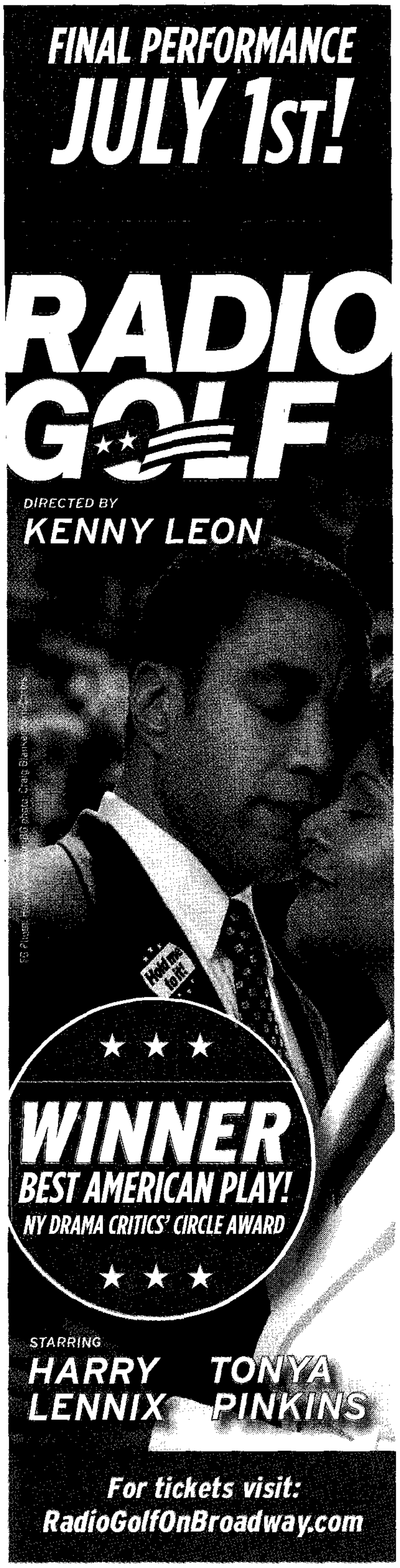


THE WORLD OF BUSINESS

HEDGE CLIPPING

Is there a way to get above-market returns on the cheap?

BY JOHN CASSIDY

In 2000, Harry Kat got a call from a corporate headhunter who asked whether he would be interested in joining a financial firm that invested in hedge funds—a so-called fund of funds. Kat, a forty-three-year-old Dutch economist, had recently left a high-paying job at the London office of Bank of America to pursue a career in academe. He didn't know much about hedge funds, but he agreed to be interviewed by an executive at the firm.

Hedge funds are privately owned financial companies that raise cash from very wealthy individuals and institutional investors, such as pension funds and charitable endowments. Unlike banks and brokerage firms, hedge funds are largely unregulated, which gives them considerable latitude in investing their clients' money. During the past fifteen years, the number of hedge funds has increased from about five hundred to perhaps ten thousand, and some hedge-fund managers have made vast fortunes. Last year, three reportedly earned more than a billion dollars each: James Simons, of Renaissance Technologies; Kenneth Griffin, of Citadel Investment Group; and Edward Lampert, of ESL Investments.

Hedge funds go to great lengths to maintain their mystique: Simons and other managers rarely grant interviews, and the mostly young analysts and traders who make up the funds' staffs sign confidentiality agreements barring them from discussing their work. The public, denied information about the industry's methods, has focussed instead on the conspicuous spending it has enabled, seeing in the life styles of the funds' managers proof of their ingenuity. Steven Cohen, the founder of SAC Capital Advisors, lives in a thirty-two-thousand-square-foot house in Greenwich, Connecticut, and last year reportedly paid $143.5 million for a painting by Willem de Kooning.

In the jargon of Wall Street, hedge funds seek "alpha": returns greater than those provided by standard market indices, such as the Dow Jones Industrial Average and the S. & P. 500. Investing in hedge funds can be lucrative, but it is also risky: the funds, many of which are highly leveraged, have a tendency to implode when their investments turn against them. (Last week, two hedge funds run by Bear Stearns, the investment bank, were brought to the brink of closure after losing hundreds of millions of dollars, largely in bonds tied to the sub-prime mortgage market.) Funds of funds hold stakes in a variety of hedge funds, so they are somewhat safer. However, as the executive made clear to Kat, investing in them is costly.

Typically, hedge-fund managers charge their clients a management fee equal to two per cent of the amount they invest, plus twenty per cent of any profits that the fund generates. (This fee structure is known as "two and twenty.") On top of these charges, funds of funds often add a management fee of one per cent, plus a commission of ten per cent on investment gains. Thus, people who invest in funds of funds are effectively paying a three-per-cent management fee plus a "success fee" of thirty per cent—"three and thirty."

This arithmetic helps explain the astronomical wealth of leading hedge-fund managers, and suggests why even less successful competitors make plenty of money. If a fund manager does well, he gets to keep a large portion of the profits he makes using his clients' money; if he does poorly, he still receives the generous management fees, at least until his clients withdraw their money, which isn't always easy to do. (Some funds impose "lockup" periods of several years.) Kat had worked in the financial markets for almost fifteen years, but what he learned about hedge-fund fees shocked him. An investor who puts a million dollars in a fund of funds whose value goes up ten per cent in twelve months would face deductions of about sixty thousand dollars on the gains he makes. "Who wants to pay that kind of money?" Kat asked the executive who was interviewing him. "You can't seriously expect there to be anything interesting left after somebody takes out three and thirty." The executive was nonplussed. "I don't know," he said. "But they pay it."

The executive's firm offered Kat a job as the head of research, but he turned it down. The following year, he began teaching finance at the University of Reading, and in 2003 he became a professor of risk management at Sir John Cass Business School, which is part of City University in London. He continued to think about hedge funds. "When I became an academic, I said, 'That's the thing I want to investigate,' " he recalled recently. "Is it really possible to generate investment returns to the extent that you can take out three and thirty and still be left with something you can call superior?"

Kat had moved to London in 1996, several years after completing a Ph.D. in economics and statistics at the University of Amsterdam. He worked in the derivatives department of an investment bank, where he traded futures and options—financial contracts in which a buyer has an obligation or option to pay a fixed price for a commodity or a security at a future date. Futures and options are relatively simple derivatives; for decades, farmers and businessmen have relied on them to stabilize their incomes. In the past twenty years, however, new kinds of custom-built derivatives have emerged, which allow investors to make bets on, say, the future creditworthiness of corporations, or the future volatility of the stock market.

Kat became an expert in these complex securities, and by the late nineties he was head of the equity-derivatives desk at Bank of America. He never adjusted to corporate life, though. "If you really want to get up at 5 A.M., get the train, and spend all day in the office for twenty-five years, well, good luck," he said. "I didn't want to do that."

Harry Kat questioned why anyone would pay hedge-fund fees.

RICHARD THOMPSON

Studying hedge funds proved to be a more satisfying, if less remunerative, challenge. (As a professor, Kat earns less than a hundred thousand pounds a year—about a tenth of what he was earning as a financier.) Aside from their fee structure, hedge funds generally have little in common. A few make long-term investments; most buy and sell incessantly. Some trade individual stocks; others place bets on entire industries and markets. Some rely on human intuition to identify plum investments; many use computer software programs to ferret out profitable trades.

Kat, realizing that it would be nearly impossible to determine the trading strategies of individual hedge funds—the companies would never agree to divulge them—decided to study their results instead. Hedge funds aren't required to file quarterly reports with the Securities and Exchange Commission, so it isn't easy to get accurate information about their earnings. However, several financial-publishing companies now collate data on monthly returns which hedge funds supply to them voluntarily, presumably in order to impress potential investors. The databases that these publishers have assembled are neither complete nor entirely reliable, but they include information on thousands of funds, some of it dating back to the nineteen-eighties.

When Kat examined the databases, he noticed that in most years hedge funds outperformed the Dow and the S. & P. 500; they appeared to have produced alpha. But the figures in the databases don't take into account the unusual risks that hedge funds take. Many funds use borrowed money to leverage their investments; they short stocks; and they speculate on the price of volatile commodities, such as gold and coffee.

It is well known that risk and return tend to go together. If you go to Atlantic City and bet your life's savings on a roulette wheel's coming up black, you have a good chance of earning an instant return of a hundred per cent; you also have a good chance of going broke. Playing roulette is a high-risk, high-return activity. Putting your money in a bank C.D. is a low-risk, low-return activity. Truly outstanding investors, such as Warren Buffett, somehow generate consistently high returns at low risk. Kat decided to determine whether hedge funds met this standard; only if they did could they genuinely be said to have created alpha. In a study published in the June, 2003, issue of the *Journal of Financial and Quantitative Analysis*, he and a co-author, Gaurav Amin, an analyst at Schroder Investment Management, a British financial firm, compared the fee-adjusted returns of seventy-seven hedge funds between 1990 and 2000 with the returns generated by a market benchmark that had a similar risk profile. Seventy-two of the funds—more than ninety per cent—failed to outperform their benchmarks.

With the help of a graduate student, Helder Palaro, Kat also undertook a larger study, in which he examined more than nineteen hundred funds. The results, which Kat and Palaro posted online as a working paper last year, showed that only eighteen per cent of the funds outperformed their benchmarks, and returns even at the most successful funds tended to decline over time. "Our research has shown that in at least eighty per cent of cases the after-fee alpha for hedge funds is negative," Kat told me. "They are charging more than they are adding. I'm not saying they don't have skill; I'm just saying they don't have enough skill to make up for two and twenty."

Other economists had been scrutinizing hedge funds closely. In a widely discussed 2005 paper, Burton Malkiel, a Princeton professor, and Atanu Saha, a New York investment analyst, argued that many published estimates of hedge-fund returns are misleading. Malkiel and Saha discovered that funds tend to exaggerate how well they performed in the past, and that those which perform badly often close and disappear from databases, leaving a biased sample. After examining results of now defunct firms, Malkiel and Saha found that between 1996 and 2003 hedge funds made an average return of 9.32 per cent, significantly less than the 13.74-per-cent average return of funds included in the published databases.

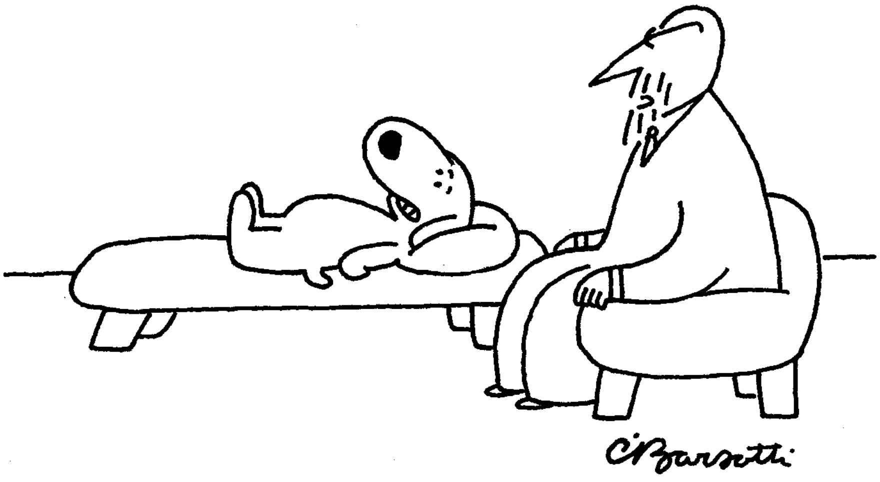
Stephen Brown, William Goetzmann, and Bing Liang, researchers at New York University, Yale, and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, respectively, have published data suggesting that the fees paid by investors in many funds of funds negate most or all of what is generated in extra returns. And several groups of researchers—including William Fung, of the London Business School, and David Hsieh, of Duke; and Jasmina Hasanhodzic and Andrew Lo, of M.I.T.—have shown that broad market movements in the prices of stocks, bonds, and other common securities account for a good deal of the variation in hedge-fund returns. These findings suggest that stock picking, trading smarts, and computer algorithms are less important than many scholars had thought. "Our idea was to see how much of the variation in hedge-fund returns you could explain using very simple, passive investment strategies," Lo said. "Given all the hype and mystique surrounding hedge funds, we expected the answer to be 'very little.' We were quite surprised to find that it was about forty per cent."

Kat, though, has gone farther than other researchers in challenging the hedge-fund industry's reputation—and threatening its sources of funding. Much of the money in such funds comes not only from the industry's traditional clients—rich people hoping to get richer—but from institutional investors that manage money on behalf of the middle classes. In 2000 and 2001, when the stock market collapsed, most hedge funds held up pretty well. Some made money by shorting stocks; others were holding commodities and other kinds of assets that were unaffected by the crash. The ability to generate positive returns at a time when most financial investments were faltering suggested that hedge funds had lived up to their name: they had provided valuable hedges. Among the institutional investors that have put their clients' money in hedge funds are several large pension funds, including those for employees of General Motors and those for state workers in New Jersey and California. (Earlier this year, William Thompson, Jr., the comptroller for New York City, announced that he was considering investing some of the city's pension funds in hedge funds.) Such institutional investors aren't merely chasing high returns; they are seeking to diversify their holdings as insurance against another bear market.

However, Kat remained skeptical. As he conducted his research on hedge funds, he became convinced that it might be possible to generate similar returns in a mechanical way and with much less effort. Two years ago, he and Palaro began to sketch out ideas for a software program that could mimic the returns of individual hedge funds by trading futures. "We may be able to do without expensive hedge-fund managers and all the hassle, including the due diligence, the lack of liquidity, the lack of transparency, the lack of capacity and the fear of style drift"—changes in a fund's strategy—"which comes with investing in hedge funds," Kat and Palaro wrote in a working paper about the project which they published last year.

Kat provided many of the mathematical ideas. Palaro, an experienced programmer, did most of the computer work. Rather than trying to emulate a hedge fund's monthly return—a nearly impossible task—the researchers sought to match the fund's results over a period of several years, as well as the other statistical properties of its performance that investors were likely to care about most: the volatility of the returns, their correlation with the stock market, the likelihood of suffering extreme losses.

In the spring of last year, Kat sent me an e-mail in which he expressed confi-



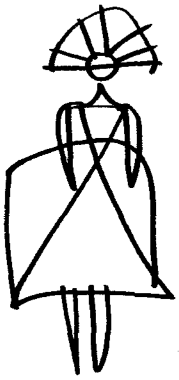
"Protect your family, protect your yard, and stop obsessing about port security."

dence that he and Palaro would succeed. "It is possible to design mechanical futures-trading strategies which generate returns with the same, and often better, risk-return properties as hedge funds," he said. "This means investors can have hedge-fund returns but without the massive fees and all the other drawbacks that come with the real thing."

By the end of 2006, Kat and Palaro had finished writing their software program, which they called FundCreator, and had conducted several successful trials. In April, Kat demonstrated the software for me at his office on the Cass Business School's campus. A hefty man with blue eyes and spiky brown hair, Kat was wearing jeans, sneakers, and a garish striped polo shirt. When he turned on his computer, a hideous animal's head, replete with fangs and horns, appeared on the screen. Kat, an avid heavy-metal fan who plays the electric guitar, said, "That's the FundCreator monster. Now let's get started."

I entered my name and address and the amount of money—a hundred million dollars—I wanted the system to manage. Then I had to select the kinds of futures contracts I wanted to trade. The choices included equity futures, interest-rate futures, commodity futures, and currency futures. These futures are the building blocks that FundCreator uses to simulate hedge-fund investments. Next, I was directed to a screen that allowed me to choose from a list of several thousand hedge funds. I asked Kat if I could replicate one run by George Soros. Using a pull-down menu, Kat clicked on Quantum Fund NV, which for many years was Soros's investment flagship and often had an annual return of twenty-five per cent or more. A Web page appeared that was full of statistics detailing Quantum's record going back to 1985. It showed that the annual volatility of Quantum's returns—the amount they varied from year to year—was high (twenty-four per cent), indicating that the fund was a risky investment. The coefficient of correlation between Quantum's returns and the S. & P. 500—a statistical measure of how closely the fund's performance tracked the stock index—was low (0.35), indicating that Quantum provided valuable diversification. "If you say you want to replicate Quantum, you leave it all as it is," Kat said, pointing to boxes displaying each figure. "But you can also do some genetic engineering. If you want zero correlation with the S. & P. 500, you write in zero. If you leave it all as it is, that is called fund replication. If you change something, that is called fund creation."

I decided not to change any of the fund's parameters. The next step was to determine, by pressing a button, whether the software could perform what I'd asked it to. "You might be asking for something it is just impossible to pull off," Kat said. "I get e-mails every week from people saying, 'Harry, can you make a twenty-five-per-cent average return with no volatility?' Of course I can't. The interest rate on Treasury bonds is five per cent. That is what I can achieve without any volatility."



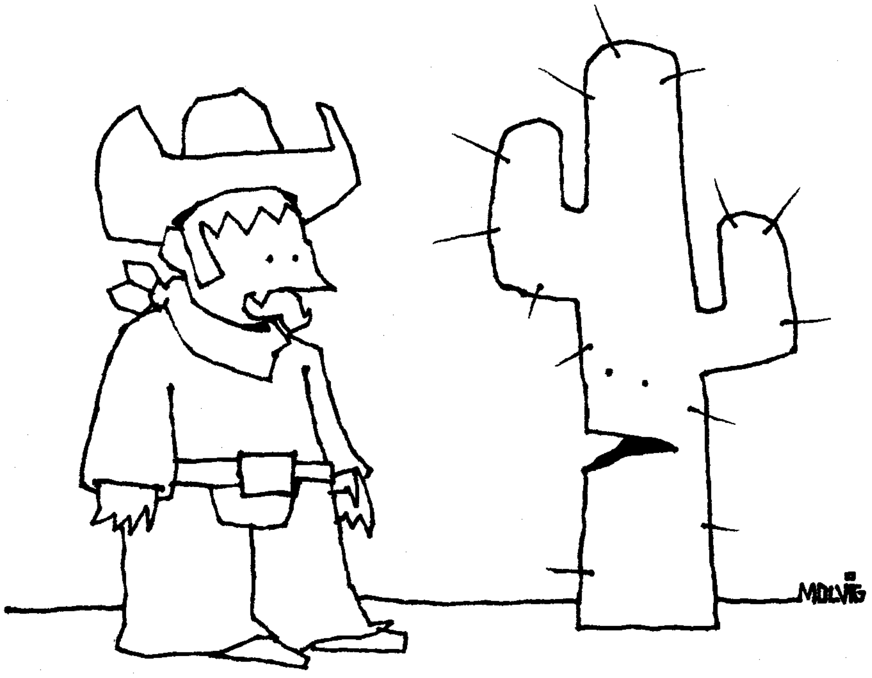
FundCreator indicated that it could replicate Quantum. Kat pressed a few more buttons. On a new page, a list of the futures I had chosen appeared, along with numbers next to them indicating how many contracts I needed to buy and sell. The software doesn't carry out actual futures trades. An investor may do those himself, or he can enlist the help of one of two brokerage firms that have agreed to provide such services for FundCreator. Each night, after the markets have closed, FundCreator downloads financial data from all over the world and determines what new trades each of its users needs. When a user logs on in the morning, a red light flashes to indicate that action is needed. "You just click on it every day, it tells you what you need to do, you do it, and you get Quantum," Kat said proudly. "It's simple."

What goes on behind the screen is more complicated. After I entered my choices, FundCreator ran through fifty-four different statistical models, picking the one that best fit the monthly returns for Quantum Fund NV. Then the program, using the model it had selected, together with some sophisticated mathematical formulas, chose the investments I needed to make. These calculations were completed within seconds.

The theoretical ideas behind FundCreator are well established. Most ultimately derive from what is known as the Black-Scholes formula, which was developed by economists in the early nineteen-seventies to determine the price of stock options. Kat and Palaro relied on a version of Black-Scholes similar to the one that investment banks use to design hedging strategies for their own derivatives portfolios. However, Kat and Palaro were the first to apply the formula to create virtual hedge funds based on existing ones. "The new thing is that it allows you to generate returns with predefined properties," Kat said. "Normally, managers of hedge funds will give you some idea of the properties they are looking for, but they won't pin themselves down to a certain number. They'll tell you they are aiming for a volatility of eight per cent or so, but, if you give them a few years and calculate what it was, it could have been six, it could have been eight, or ten, or even more. Our method allows you to pinpoint a certain number."

In the past twelve months, several investment banks, among them Goldman Sachs and Merrill Lynch, have launched their own low-cost alternatives to hedge funds. These so-called tracker funds, inspired by academic research, including work by Fung and Hsieh and by Hasanhodzic and Lo, try to mimic the performance of a basket of hedge funds by accumulating many of the same types of assets that are in the funds' portfolio—stocks, bonds, currencies, commodities, credit swaps. "Unlike Kat's model, tracker funds are not designed to replicate individual funds," Lo told me. "They try to capture some of what hedge funds do as a class. The idea is to provide institutional investors with a relatively inexpensive vehicle by which to achieve the risk-reward tradeoffs they are looking for, without some of the drawbacks of investing in hedge funds, such as lack of transparency."

Kat and Palaro originally intended to use FundCreator to demonstrate for business students and scholars the feasibility of replicating hedge-fund returns. Late last year, after several articles about the software appeared in the British financial press, and professional investors approached Kat and Palaro about using it, they launched it as a business—though



“I think that’s enough peyote for one day.”

* * *

not, Kat insists, with the expectation of making much money. “I like my life as it is,” he told me. “If we made a lot of money, I wouldn’t know what to do with it. I’ve got a house here. I’ve got a summer house in Spain. That’s enough. The only thing I need more of is time.”

FundCreator’s launch coincided with the end of a particularly bad year for hedge funds: in 2006, the majority failed to match the 15.8-per-cent return of the S. & P. 500. In February, Russell Read, the chief investment officer for the California state employees’ pension fund, complained at a financial conference that many hedge funds were charging clients large sums that weren’t matched by large returns. “A lot of people are waking up to the fact that hedge-fund fees are a bit steep, and they are looking for alternatives,” Kat said.

In the London financial community, word of FundCreator’s abilities has spread rapidly. As of last week, Kat said, two institutional investors were paying to use it, and more than fifty were experimenting with it. Kat and Palaro charge their clients an annual fee of roughly a third of one per cent of the money they invest using the software—less than a fifth of what most hedge funds charge. The cost of executing futures trades must be added on to FundCreator’s management fees, but, unlike at hedge funds, investors keep all the gains they make. “Why would you pay the high fees that hedge funds charge if you are able to get the same risk characteristics, in a statistical sense, by using a dynamic futures-trading strategy?” Bas Peeters, the head of structured products at ING Investment Management, said to me. “FundCreator is potentially a very cost-efficient solution.” Pete Eggleston, the head of quantitative solutions at the Royal Bank of Scotland, one of the biggest banks in Europe, said of FundCreator, “Such approaches may revolutionize the industry in terms of providing investors with access to lower-cost investment returns.”

Some scholars remain skeptical. “As a renegade statistician, I am a little bit suspicious of Kat’s methods,” Stephen Brown, of N.Y.U., said to me. He pointed out that, unlike Quantum, many hedge funds have been around for just a few years and there is little information about their performance. “On the basis of very limited data, it is a real challenge to construct an accurate and robust model of hedge-fund returns,” Brown said. Andrew Lo said that using FundCreator may not be as straightforward as it seems. “From the point of view of theory, there is nothing wrong with what Kat is doing,” he said. “But all dynamic trading strategies involving derivatives carry some risk. They rely on very specialized mathematical assumptions. If the assumptions turn out to be wrong, you can be mis-estimating the risks in a big way.” Faulty assessments of risk contributed to major financial losses suffered by Long-Term Capital Management and several other companies that have encountered problems trading derivatives.

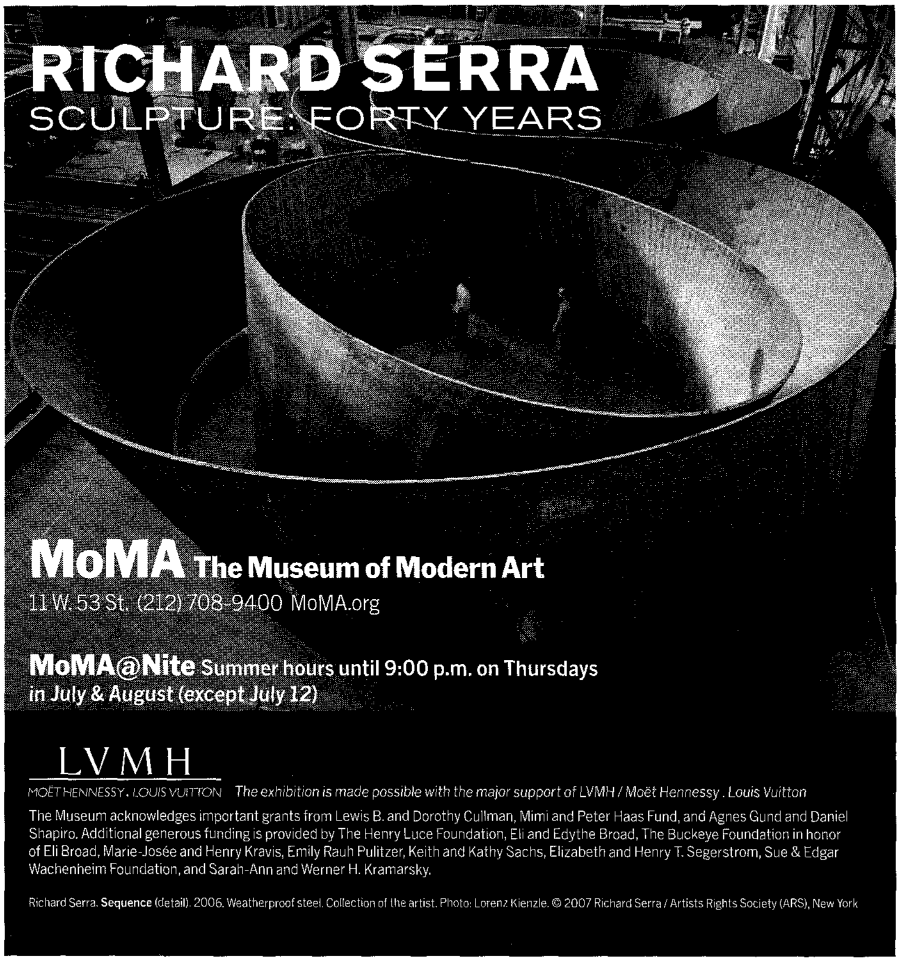
Veryan Allen, an investment adviser and former hedge-fund executive who writes a blog about hedge funds (hedgefund.blogspot.com), said in a post last December, “If Goldman Sachs, Dow Jones, Merrill Lynch, Andrew Lo, or Harry Kat think they can do it, great . . . but I suspect investors will end up disappointed if they think the returns from hedge-fund clones will be anywhere near the performance of the best hedge funds.” Allen went on, “No matter what occurs in the markets, well-managed ‘expensive’ hedge funds operating proprietary strategies with skilled traders, robust risk management, and technology will perform, even under pessimistic economic scenarios. . . . That is why it is worth paying the two and twenty. . . . Average or generic hedge funds can certainly be replicated, but not the best hedge funds.”

When I asked Kat about the hedge-fund industry’s reaction to FundCreator, he said, “People say, ‘Look, you don’t generate any alpha.’ After fees, I generate a lot of alpha. I just generate it differently. Instead of trying to beat the market, I get the fees down.” He conceded that there will always be hedge funds whose returns FundCreator can’t hope to match, but he argued that even some of the most prestigious funds owe much of their success to luck. “You can be fortunate,” he said. “You can live off market trends for quite a while. As in credit spreads”—the difference in yields between different types of bonds. “Credit spreads start to come down, and you make lots of money in credit. A couple of guys from an investment bank’s credit desk jump out and start a fund. If they are lucky, the trend continues for another couple of years, and they will look like masters of the universe. But when the trend reverses, or when there is no trend left, they are in trouble. If a guy has done well for two years, what does that mean? He could be really smart, or he could be really lucky. If I had bought stocks at the end of 1997 and you had looked at me at the end of 1999, I would have looked brilliant."

It is notoriously difficult to distinguish between genuine investment skill and random variation. But firms like Renaissance Technologies, Citadel Investment Group, and D. E. Shaw appear to generate consistently high returns and low volatility. Shaw's main equity fund has posted average annual returns, after fees, of twenty-one per cent since 1989; Renaissance has reportedly produced even higher returns. (Most of the top-performing hedge funds are closed to new investors.) Kat questioned whether such firms, which trade in huge volumes on a daily basis, ought to be categorized as hedge funds at all. "Basically, they are the largest market-making firms in the world, but they call themselves hedge funds because it sells better," Kat said. "The average horizon on a trade for these guys is something like five seconds. They earn the spread. It's very smart, but their skill is in technology. It's in sucking up tick-by-tick data, processing all those data, and converting them into second-by-second positions in thousands of spreads worldwide. It's just algorithmic market-making."

Almost by definition, there can be only a handful of genius investors, Kat continued. "And even if they are there, the chances that you will find them and that they will let you in are very, very slim," he said. "That's what I tell people. If you are really convinced that you can find those super managers, then don't waste your time with our stuff. Go look for them. But if you are a bit more realistic, if you know that eighty per cent of hedge-fund managers aren't worth the fees they charge, then the rational thing to do is to give up trying to find a super manager, and just go for a good, efficient diversifier instead."

Not so long ago, Kat recalled, one hedge-fund manager, a "global macro" investor who specializes in betting on currencies and stock markets around the world, approached him with an offer. "He said, 'Harry, I want to buy your thing so I can replicate myself. Then I'll be able to enjoy life a bit more and keep sending my clients bills for two plus twenty. It'll take them years to figure it out, if they ever do.' " ♦


RICHARD SERRA
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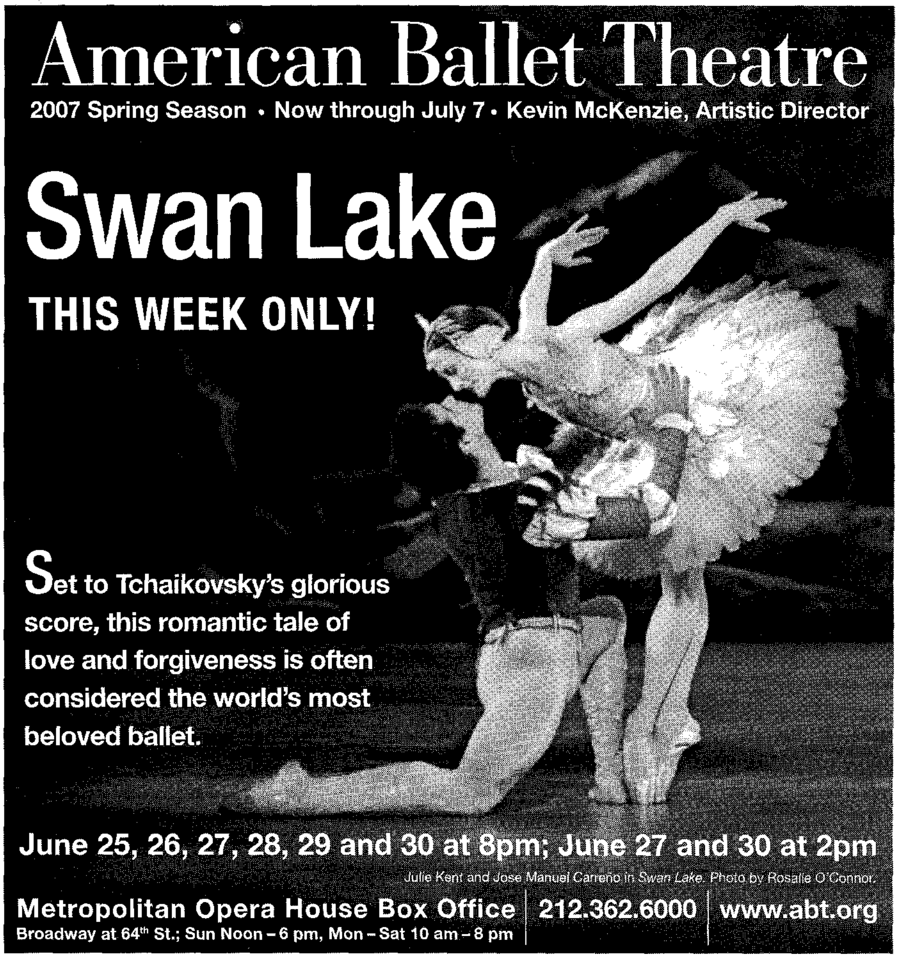
Richard Serra. **Sequence** (detail). 2006. Weatherproof steel. Collection of the artist. Photo: Lorenz Kienzle. © 2007 Richard Serra / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York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SHOUTS & MURMURS

MY NATURE DOCUMENTARY

BY JACK HANDEY

Show monkey in a tree. Narrator says, "The monkey, proud and smart, in his native habitat. But one thing he does not have . . ." Show a giraffe. ". . . is a long neck, like the giraffe. Which is why nature has allowed them to combine forces." Show monkey on giraffe's neck. (Note: Monkey may have to be tied on.)

Then the narrator says, "The monkey can now see very far, and has protection from predators. And the giraffe has a little friendly guy to ride around on him."

The monkey is shot by a poacher and falls from giraffe. Put ketchup on monkey to make him look bloody, but put something bad-tasting in the ketchup or monkey will lick it all off. Shoot BB gun at giraffe to make him run off.

Narrator: "The monkey and the giraffe have been separated."

Show monkey wandering around, injured, lost and alone. Make him trip, using fishing line attached to his leg. (Try to get this on first take, because after that monkey will probably try to bite off fishing line.)

Show giraffe being chased by a lion. If not too expensive, use full-sized, realistic robotic lion, able to run at full speed. Otherwise get a man in a lion suit.

The oppressive sun beats down on monkey (heat lamp). Monkey looks up with an expression that says, "Why, oh sun, do you torment me so?" (Get good director.)

We see lion eating a giraffe. At first, we think it is our giraffe, but then we are relieved to see it is a baby giraffe.

Rock slide covers monkey (fake monkey). Show monkey crawling out (real monkey with a few heavy rocks laid on top of him).

Narrator: "Can the monkey and the giraffe survive? Will they ever be reunited?"

Show monkey trying to join group of monkeys (real monkeys or children in monkey suits, whichever is cheaper). Our monkey is driven away by the leader of the monkey pack, a vicious, snarling brute (papier-mâché marionette). Subtitle translates snarls as "You thought you were so great when you were riding on that giraffe's neck, but you aren't so high and mighty now."

Show giraffe, alone in the darkness, shivering from fear (ice packs on legs). Finally, he falls asleep (sleeping pills?). We see his dream. In it, the giraffe fearfully approaches a gravestone. At first, he can't make out the name on it, but when he finally does he is shocked. The name on the gravestone reads, "The Monkey." The giraffe wakes up in a cold sweat (heat lamp).

Show two female explorers swimming in a crystal-clear lagoon, so you can see they're nude. Narrator: "Meanwhile, nearby are two explorers, Laci and Brandy." Show the explorers swimming for quite a while. Then show them getting dressed and leaving. We notice they have left behind a pair of binoculars.

The monkey is starving now. We know this because when he looks at a parrot on a branch it turns into a roasted, steaming parrot on a branch.

Narrator: "The monkey is now at the end of his rope. So he puts his faith in the Almighty." Monkey prays. (Glue monkey's hands together.) Show monkey walking along later. (Be sure to unglue hands first.) He sees a glowing treasure chest and opens it—it's filled with bananas. (Have choir singing in background, so you know it's from God.)

Refreshed and healed by that good banana nutrition, the monkey heads off. For comic relief, show monkey approaching a skunk and getting sprayed. If monkey will not approach skunk, feed monkey whiskey so he will relax and go up to skunk. However, do not let him drink too much or he may kill skunk.

Show monkey finding binoculars. Monkey learns how to use binoculars. (Have plenty of film, because this may take a long time.) Monkey climbs up tree and scans horizon. We see his point of view, which finally focusses on, yes, the giraffe! He screams (BB pellet) with joy.

Just then, the giraffe is shot by a tranquillizer dart. We show the shooters, two trappers from a zoo. We know they are evil because we saw a part earlier where they were shooting each other with tranquillizer darts, to get high.

Cut to a truck travelling across the savanna. In a cage in the back is the giraffe, looking sad (half a sleeping pill). But then we reveal that it's not the two trappers driving the truck but the monkey! (Note: Use cheap truck, because monkey will probably wreck it.)

Show the two trappers sitting on the ground, tied up. No need to show how the monkey captured them; just have one of the trappers say, "That damn monkey!"

Show monkey releasing giraffe from cage and monkey leaping onto neck of giraffe. (Note: Monkey may not do this, so put monkey on giraffe's neck and jerk back with harness; then show film in reverse.)

Narrator: "The monkey and the giraffe are reunited at last, as nature intended." Show giraffe trying in vain to reach a piece of fruit high on a tree branch. The monkey clambers up on top of giraffe's head and picks the fruit, but then eats it himself. The giraffe shakes his head and laughs. (Give giraffe something to induce choking, then dub in laughing sounds.)

Show the two female explorers returning to the lagoon, looking for the binoculars. They can't find them, so they just decide to go swimming again.

Monkey and giraffe gallop off into sunset. Question: Would it be too much to show monkey wearing a little cowboy hat? Cute, but maybe hurts reality of the documentary. ◆

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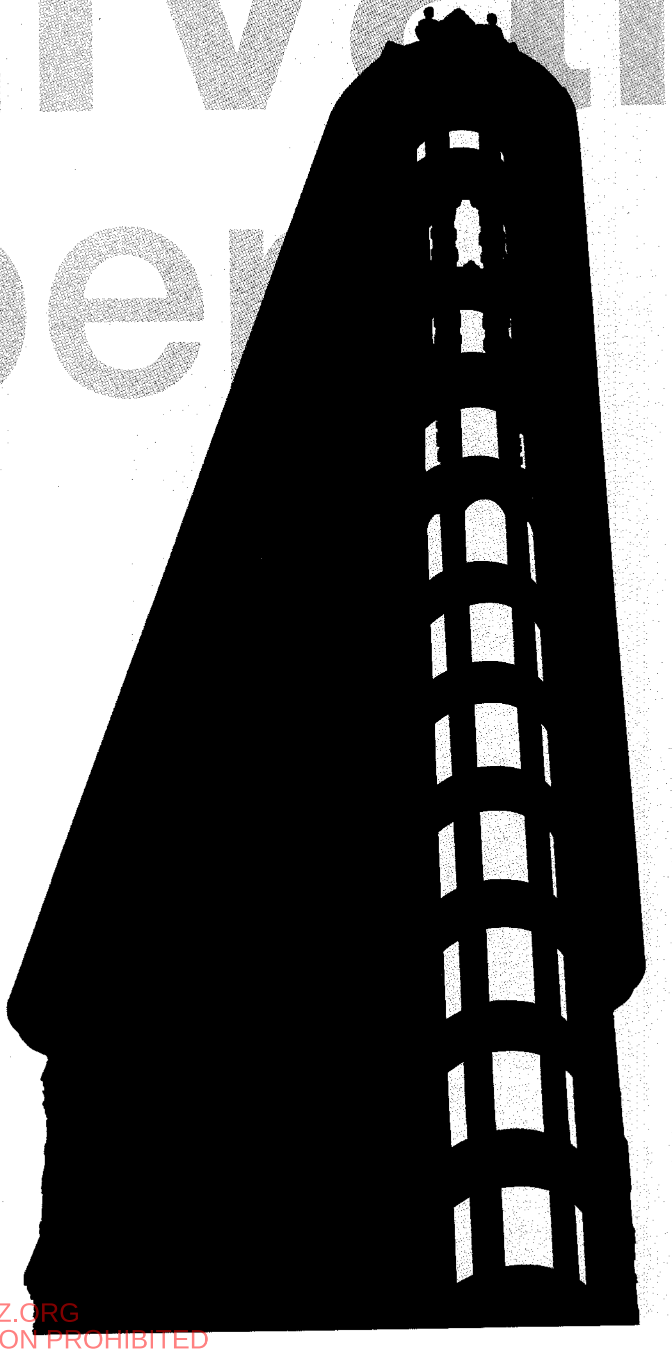
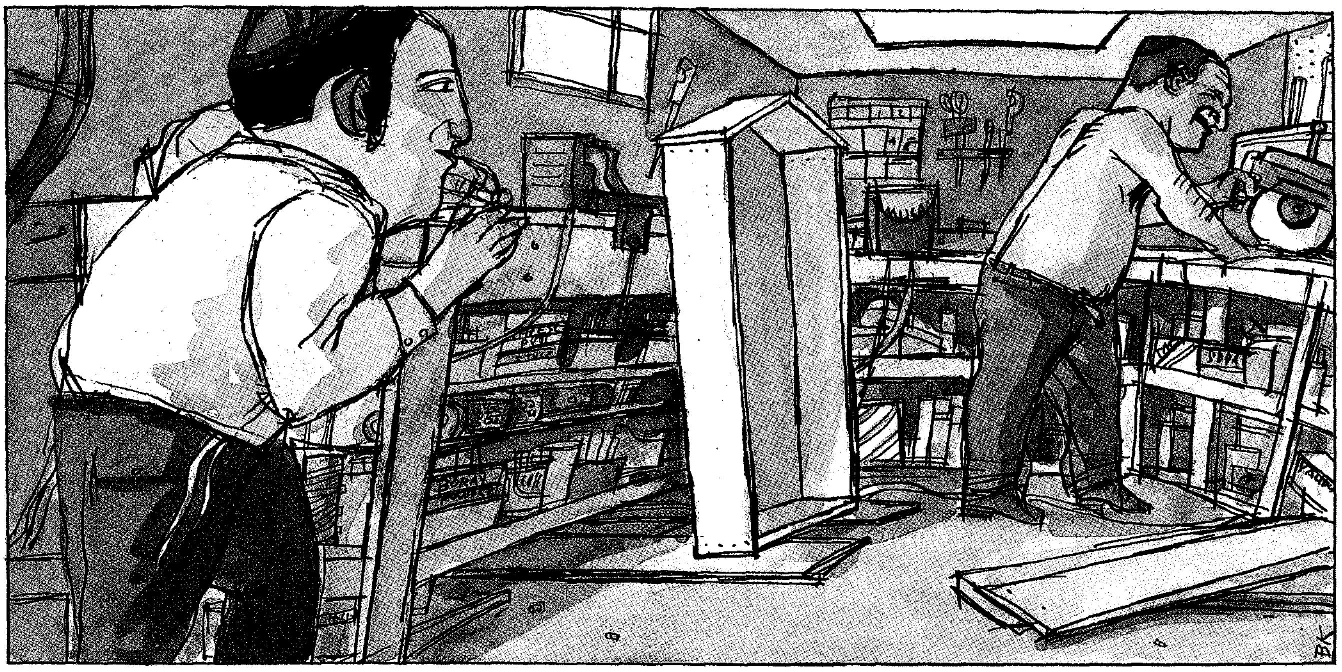


PERSONAL HISTORY

SAVE US

How to handle bad behavior.

BY SHALOM AUSLANDER



My father could build anything with just a hammer and a saw and the few things he brought back from Rickel Home Center.

One Saturday night, Rabbi Blonsky called my father to ask if he would help with the renovation of our local synagogue. "He who contributes to the building of a synagogue is considered to have saved the entire Jewish people," he said.

Rabbi Blonsky (some names have been changed) presided over a congregation of about fifty families in a converted farmhouse in the rural town of Monsey, New York. He was about forty years old, and he spent a lot of time worrying about the Jewish people. I was eight years old, and it was the Jewish people in my house that I was worried about.

Just two years before, I worried so much that I started to do Nixon. This was after the night that my father, having had a bit more Sabbath wine than God commanded, used the dining-room table to trap my brother, six years older, in a corner, as he tried to run for the door.

"Cocksucker," said my father.

"Please," said my mother.

At school, I learned that when God told Noah that a great storm was coming, and commanded him to build the ark, Noah refused. "Why should I have to save everyone?" he asked. And so God took Noah, and He showed him how wicked the people in his generation had become, and how they had forgotten God, and how hatred had filled their hearts, and Noah realized that if he didn't save them nobody would.

This is why I started doing Nixon.

As the clouds over our dining room grew heavy with bile, and the winds of bickering blew across the table—*Keep it up*, my father would growl at my brother, fists clenched beside his dinner plate, *see what it gets you*—I would jump down from my chair and make my way to the foot of the table. Showtime.

"*Gib a keek*," my mother told my father. Take a look.

I threw my arms out to the side and quickly drew them back against my ribs in a modified version of "The Thinker," right hand tucked beneath my left elbow, left hand crooked underneath my chin. Then I walked to the head of the table, head down, shoulders hunched, shaking my head and muttering, "I am not a thief, I am not a thief."

"What on earth?" my mother would exclaim, throwing her head back in desperate laughter.

"He's doing Richard Nixon," my brother said.

"How does he know from Richard Nixon?"

I didn't know from Richard Nixon; I'd seen a man doing this on television a few days earlier. His name was Dan Aykroyd. I didn't know who he was, either, but I knew that everyone had laughed. I thought I was doing Dan Aykroyd.

My father would try his best to remain angry, but a few more Nixons up and down the table and he would smile, and the storm would pass, and the sky would start to clear. Soon, everyone at the table was laughing, and no one could remember why my father and brother had almost killed each other.

"Meshuggener kid," my father would mutter.

"Who wants more chicken?" my mother would ask.

BEN KATCHOR

"I am not a thief," I would say. "I am not a thief."

Everyone loves Nixon.

Something had happened. I could remember a time when my father and I would play-wrestle before bed. He'd taught me how to swim, and sometimes let me drive his mower, and, on a really good day, we'd go into the garage, close the door behind us, and together we'd build something. My father could build anything—tables, bookcases, stairs, a whole room—with just a hammer and a saw and the few things he brought back from his weekly trips to Rickel Home Center. The things that he built were beautiful—the edges were sharp, and the joints were tight, and there was never a gap or a split. My rabbis told me I had a *yiddishe kop*, literally, a Jewish head, which meant that I was smart (a *goyishe kop*, or Gentile head, meant you were stupid), but, Jewish head or not, I could never figure out how my father knew just where to cut, which board to use, or how they all fit together so perfectly in the end.

But something had happened.

"What happened?" I asked my mother.

"You should never know the pain of losing a child," my mother said.

She was talking about Jeffie. Jeffie was their second child. He was nearly three years old when he died—long before I was born—of a disease whose name, like Hitler's, was rarely spoken. There was a picture of him on the wall in the hallway, sitting in the back of a car with my older brother. Jeffie was asleep, with his head on my brother's shoulder. He had curly hair like mine.

"Cocksucker," I would say to Jeffie when my family fought. "Look what you did."

Of all the things my father built, the one I remember most vividly is an ark. No one else remembers this. My parents recall him building bookshelves for the synagogue, and a new kitchen table and a back deck for our house. I was only eight years old at the time, and they think I'm wrong, but I remember the ark. Sometimes I think it's because I was the only one paying attention.

The ark is the holiest place in the synagogue, the place where the Holy Spirit of God comes to rest during prayers, and where the Torahs are kept. Torahs are written by hand, take years to complete, and cost tens of thousands of dollars. I was occasionally called up to the *bimah*, or altar, to help close one of our congregation's Torahs after a cantor had displayed it. This involved rolling the parchment back around the spools, tying it with an elastic buckle, slipping the velvet cover over it, and kissing it before hurrying back to my seat.

I knew that, to go along with its renovations, our synagogue needed a brand-new Holy Ark. Early one morning, I woke to the sound of my father's radial saw and scrambled out of bed. I figured the ark-building had begun.

"Piece of shit," my father growled as I tiptoed past the door to the garage. He was talking to his hammer.

I went upstairs to the kitchen, where the rest of my family was having breakfast.

"Well, I'll be," said my mother, reading loudly from the local newspaper. "Caldor's is having a sale on linens."

Jesus H. Christ!

Terrifying sounds of destruction rose up from the garage—hammers striking nails, pine splintering, heavy oak being thrown to the floor and cursed. My father still built things that were beautiful, but he built them with less and less patience and more and more rage. Something had happened to him.

"What happened to him?" I asked my mother.

"His sisters," she said. "They were very mean to him. When he was little."

Son of a fucking bitch!

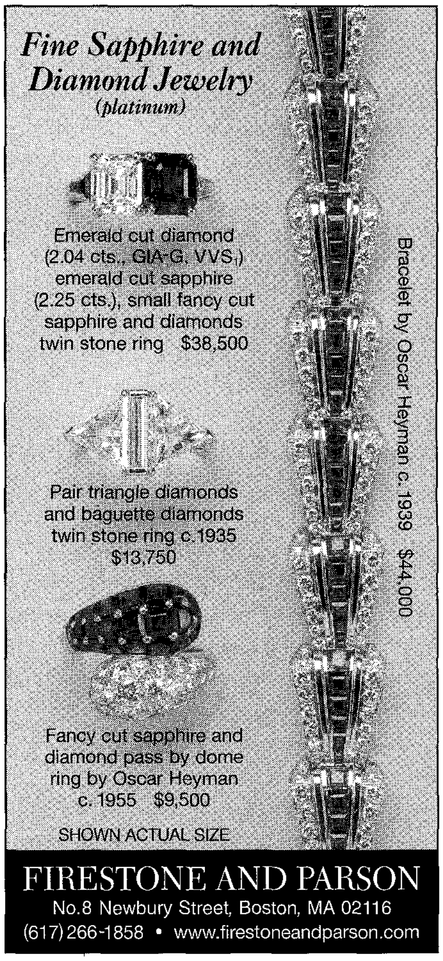
My sister lowered her head, and continued to eat her Cheerios. My brother sat glumly beside her.

Balls!

I tried to help.

"Fourteen essential vitamins and minerals," I read aloud from the back of the Cheerios box. "That's a lot. I mean, it's not just a lot of essential vitamins and minerals for a breakfast cereal to have, but it's a lot of vitamins and minerals to be considered essential, if you see what I mean. It makes you think about how fragile we—"

"Why don't you go help your father?" my mother said to me.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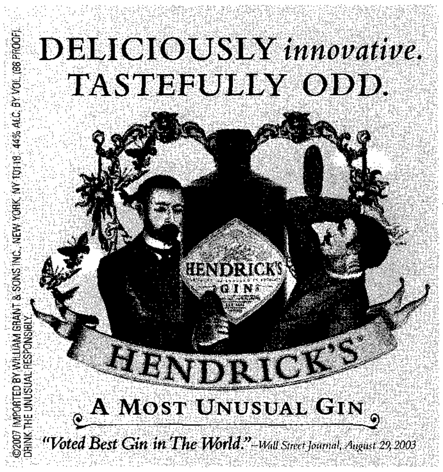
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"Ha-ha," my brother said mockingly, flicking my ear with his index finger.

"Stop it," my mother said. "He's not so bad."

I finished my breakfast and walked into the garage just as my father was throwing another piece of lumber onto the scrap pile in the corner.

"Wracked," he said. Boards that were wracked were twisted and couldn't be used. He pulled on his shirt, grabbed his cigarettes, and refastened his yarmulke to his hair.

"WE'RE GOING TO RICKEL'S," he shouted up to my mother.

I followed him out to the driveway, taking one last hopeful glance back at the house. My mother waved to me from the bedroom window.

"Go," she mouthed silently. "Go."

God damn it, I thought.

"Move your ass!" my father hollered, leaning on his car horn. "Light's green, idiot!"

I slid down in the passenger seat and attempted to communicate telepathically with the other drivers, trying my best to excuse my father's behavior. *You should never know the pain of losing a child,* I thought to them.

"Pick a lane, bozo!" my father yelled.

"What's a mitre joint?" I asked. This was a new tactic, one I'd adopted when Nixon started to lose his magic: random questions about woodworking, timed to achieve maximum emotional distraction.

"Not now," my father said.

Ten minutes later, we were in the lumber department at Rickel's and my father was whistling, loading a steel dolly with tall sheets of plywood, eight-foot-long two-by-fours, and thin pieces of delicate oak trim. I was amazed that this unholy pile of roughhewn lumber was going to become a Holy Ark; it seemed like plain old wood.

Where does the holy come from? I wondered. What if we'd come ten minutes later and someone else had taken these boards? What if that person had built a doghouse out of them, a tree house, an outhouse? What if we had come too early and these were the outhouse boards?

I heard my father laughing. It was a sound I hadn't heard in a very long time.

"Well, yeah," he said. He was joking with a Rickel employee named Mike. "I suppose if they're all wracked . . ."

"Then maybe it's the straight ones that have the problem!" said Mike.

"I'll tell you," my father said through the side of his mouth (this was the way he delivered his jokes—on the sly, as if it were a sin), "if your prices were as good as your bullshit . . ."

They laughed and laughed.

Suddenly, I felt sorry for my father. He was different from the other fathers. He wasn't a rabbi like Ephraim's or Shlomo's or Akiva's or Yechezkel's or Yoel's or Motty's or Dovid's or Shimon's, or a doctor like Ari's or Hillel's or Avi's or the other Avi's or Chaim's or Mordechai's. When he picked me up from yeshiva, he waited in his car at the back of the lot, by himself, away from the other fathers, who stood talking on the front steps of the school. On Sabbath, after services ended and my mother stood in front of the synagogue chatting with her friends and neighbors, my father stood alone, at the far end of the synagogue's driveway, waiting for her with his hands in his pockets, singing traditional Yiddish Sabbath songs to which he didn't know the words.

"Yum, bum, biddy-biddy bum," he would sing. The Yiddish calm before the storm.

"I am not a thief," I would say.

"Knock it off. Go tell your mother we're leaving."

I would wait with my mother, hiding in the crowd until my father gave up and began to walk home alone. Then I would feel a pang of guilt. I wondered what it would be like if nobody in your family wanted to walk home with you from synagogue. If they actually waited for you to leave so that they could walk home without you. If they silently hoped that this was the Sabbath you would get hit by a car on your way home from synagogue and that would be the end of that.

God damn it, I would think, and hurry to join him. I didn't want him to have to walk home alone, but I also didn't want him to be home alone; if a storm was coming, and it usually was, a few hastily chugged cups of kosher wine would only make it worse.

This was also the time of my standoff with Yisroel Mendlowitz. Every day, when yeshiva came to an end and we headed downstairs to the school buses, Yisroel would wait at the bottom of the stairwell and, spotting a suitable victim for the day, grab the boy, throw him to the ground, reach between his legs, and squeeze his balls. This made it difficult to tell on him, and Yisroel knew it. How do you say "balls" to a rabbi?

"Yisroel's beating people up," I said to Rabbi Goldfinger.

It was Monday afternoon, and Yisroel had chased me down the stairwell, through the hallway, and all the way to the front door before giving up on account of heavy rabbinical presence.

"Who is he beating up?" asked Rabbi Goldfinger, sighing, and I was relieved; his exasperation seemed to indicate that he'd heard this complaint from others.

"Everyone," I said.

"I don't see anyone looking beat up."

"Well, it's not exactly beating up. . . ."

Rabbi Goldfinger looked down at me. Behind his black horn-rimmed glasses and his long black beard was a pair of warm, sensitive eyes beneath thick, expressive brows. He put his hands on my shoulders, turned me in the direction of the waiting school buses, gave me a shove, and told me that if I knew what was good for me I would stop trying to get other people into trouble.

Stupid Rabbi Goldfinger.

That Sunday, my friend Ephraim came over. My father was now spending countless hours in the garage, his temper flaring.

"Rabbi Goldfinger was right," Ephraim said, while we were playing Legos in my bedroom. "You shouldn't tell on people. It's Evil Gossip. My father told me that if you speak Evil Gossip then when you die God hangs you by your tongue until it rips off and you die."

Ephraim's father was a rabbi. He was a tall man with a big black hat and a long black beard.

"Yisroel grabs balls," I said. "He grabbed your balls last week."

"That's not beating up," Ephraim said.

"Who touched the goddam thermostat?" my father shouted. We heard him hurl something to the floor.

"Did it hurt?" I asked Ephraim.

"What?"

"Yisroel," I said.

Ephraim shrugged.

"Cocksucker," my father said.

"How come your father curses?" Ephraim asked.

"I don't know," I said.

"My father says that the Sages say that *nivul peh* makes Jewish babies die."

Nivul peh means using dirty language. In English, *nivul peh* means "disgusting mouth."

"So?" I responded. I hadn't known that. Did my father know that? I had a disgusting-mouthed father and a dead brother; it was difficult to argue with the facts.

"Shalom!" my father called. "Get in here."

Ephraim looked frightened.

"It's O.K.," I said. I led him to the garage. My father was wearing his yarmulke, but no shirt.

"Hold the end of this board up," he said.

The hair on his chest was covered with sawdust, and his stomach hung heavily over his weary black belt. I'd been to Ephraim's house dozens of times and never once seen his father without a shirt. I'd never seen him without his suit jacket. One time, his shoelace was untied, but that was an accident, and after he tied it he told me what the Sages say about he who is so involved with the words of the Torah that he forsakes his own appearance. It was something positive.

My father hiked up his pants and brushed the sawdust off his chest. I lifted the end of the board over my head to bring it level with the saw, and my father turned on the power. Ephraim, unaccustomed to the sound of the saw, stood in the driveway with his fingers in his ears.

"Easy!" shouted my father over the screaming of the saw. "Higher! That's it! Easy!"

My father sneered through the sawdust; the saw shuddered, the board shook. Angry splinters pushed into my hands as I tried to control the violent side-to-side movements I knew would burn the edges of the board. When the blade had finally made it through the board, my father pulled off his goggles and switched off the saw. Ephraim pulled his fingers out of his ears. My father turned the board onto its side and inspected the curved black marks that rippled down its side.

"Son of a bitch!" he said.

Ephraim jammed his fingers back in his ears.

"What's a biscuit joiner?" I asked.

"Not now," my father said.

We went back inside, and Ephraim phoned his mother. We took my Steve Austin doll out to the front yard and waited for her.

"Who's that?" Ephraim asked.

"Steve Austin," I said.

"The Six Million Dollar Man" was my favorite show. I'd sent away for Steve Austin's autograph weeks ago, but it still hadn't arrived.

"You're not supposed to watch TV," Ephraim said. "My father says it's a tool of the Evil Inclination."

"I know," I said.

"How come your father has so many tools?" Ephraim asked.

"He builds things," I said.

"Why?"

"Because he likes to."

"My father says anything that takes away time from serving God is wrong," Ephraim said.

"He's building a Holy Ark, you stupid idiot."

That shut him up for a little while, until my father walked by without his yarmulke.

"My father says that if you take four steps without your yarmulke it's like saying that you're not scared of God," Ephraim said.

"I know."

"So how come he doesn't wear one?"

"I don't know."

"Is he scared of God?"

"I don't know."

"He should be."

"I know."

My blood was beginning to boil.

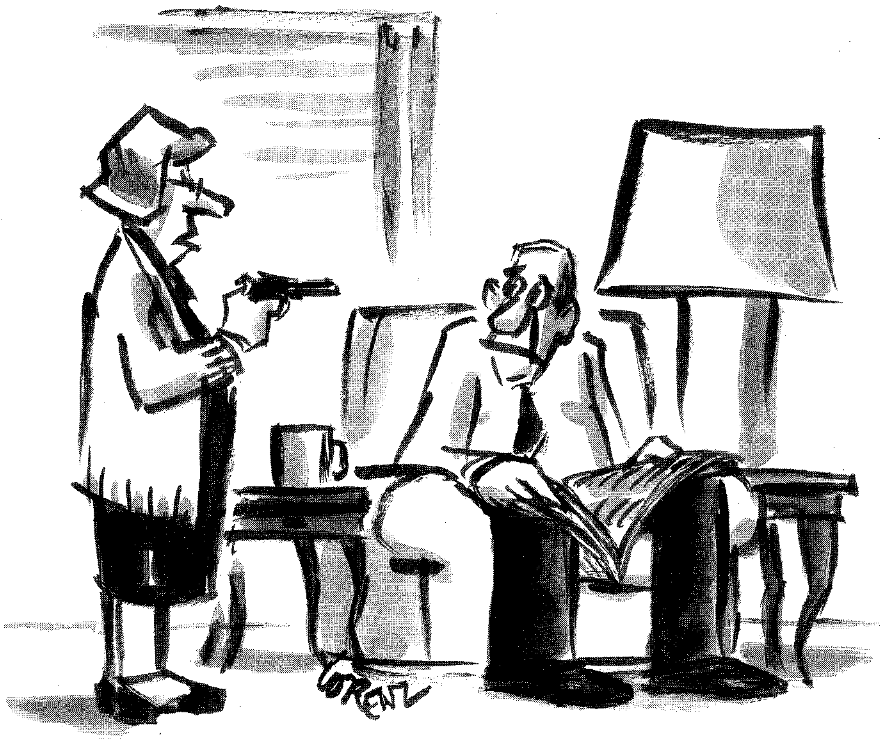
"Why does he curse?"

"I don't know."

"He shouldn't."

"I know."

The next day at school, my mind was busy with Steve Austin and rabbit joints, and that afternoon, without thinking, I took the main stairs with all the other students. Yisroel was waiting for me at the bottom.



"Sorry, Harold, but I'm reducing our carbon footprint."

He threw me on the ground and lay on top of me. His breath smelled of fish cakes and milk, and he grunted as he put his hand between my legs and squeezed.

"Cocksucker," I said.

Everyone gasped.

"Disgusting mouth!" shouted Yisroel, pointing an accusatory finger at me with his left hand. "Disgusting mouth! Disgusting mouth! You're going to hang by your tongue!"

His right hand was still crushing my balls.

The garage doors were open when I got home. There was nothing there.

"Where's the ark?" I asked my mother.

"How should I know?" she said.

"Where's Dad?" I asked.

"Oh, that's right," she said. "He was taking something to the synagogue."

"Oh."

"What's wrong?"

I shrugged.

"Did something happen at school?"

I shrugged.

"I have something that will cheer you up."

She handed me a large white envelope. It was addressed "To My Biggest Fan." I tore the envelope open and pulled out a large color photograph of Steve Austin. There was handwriting across the bottom of the photo.

"For Sharon," it read. "Love, Lee Majors."

"Who's Sharon?" I asked my mother.

She shrugged.

"Who's Lee Majors?" I asked.

She shrugged. "They probably got your name wrong," she said.

"Which name?" I asked. "Sharon or Lee Majors?"

"Sharon. Lee Majors is the actor."

"What actor?"

"The actor that plays Steve Whatever His Name Is."

"But I didn't want an actor's signature. I wanted Steve Austin's signature."

"Please," said my mother.

Friday afternoons, before yeshiva closed for the weekend, the hallways filled with students, a tempestuous sea of white shirts and black pants, as we all made our way to the synagogue for the weekly lecture from Rabbi Goldfinger, our principal, on the importance of the Sabbath. That Friday, as we went to the synagogue, the door to Rabbi Goldfinger's office was open, and we stopped to look inside.

Rabbi Goldfinger was sitting behind his desk, facing both Yisroel and a thick-bearded giant wearing a dark-blue suit and a gray wide-brimmed fedora.

"Yisroel's father," someone whispered.

Yisroel had been crying. Rabbi Goldfinger was talking, but we couldn't hear what he was saying. He continued speaking to Yisroel's father, who shook his head and rubbed his eyes with the thumb and forefinger of his hand before suddenly pulling his arm back and smacking Yisroel so hard on his bottom that Yisroel was pushed into the sharp corner of Rabbi Goldfinger's desk. Yisroel spun around, holding his hands on his bottom, and noticed us watching from the door. He tried to make a funny face, but his father lifted his hand over his head as if to strike him again, and Yisroel flinched. Rabbi Goldfinger sagely twisted his beard and fixed his stare on us.

"No *aveiras*?" Rabbi Goldfinger shouted at us. "Somebody there has no *aveiras*?"

We turned and walked away.

Aveiras are sins.

The ark was magnificent. The case was designed so that when the doors were opened there'd be no rail down the center to disrupt the view of the holy scrolls. In gold Hebrew letters across the top of the ark, the Biblical passage "Know Before Whom You Stand" was spelled out, and the reflective surface of the letters caught the flickering lights of the *Ner Tamid*, or Eternal Candle, which hung above the cantor's podium. A deep-blue velvet curtain adorned the front, trimmed in silver and gold piping, and in the center, where the two halves of the curtain met, two gold lions stood beside the two tablets of the Ten Commandments. It still didn't seem holy to me, but it was beautiful, and it filled the wall, and it made Rabbi Blonsky, sitting beside it in his leather chair, seem like a child, a little boy playing dress-up in a wise man's clothes.

That day, my father sang louder than I had ever heard him sing. He seemed happy, the way he was at Rickel's, though he didn't make any hardware jokes. Finally, the time for the reading of the Torah arrived and the entire congregation rose to its feet. Silence filled the synagogue as God's Holy Spirit rested on the ark. The cantor threw back his head and called out the blessings on the Torah. *Amen*, sang the congregation. Then he moved to the ark and pulled aside the heavy blue curtain. He grabbed the handle on the doors and pulled.

Nothing.

He pulled again.

Nothing.

He pulled a third time, harder, so hard this time that his prayer shawl slipped from his shoulder and he had to catch his yarmulke with his other hand. Rabbi Blonsky hurried over and tried his luck, but the door refused to open. He tried again, more forcefully. The ark tipped forward slightly.

"Whoa!" shouted a few of the men in the front row, shuffling backward out of harm's way.

Rabbi Blonsky turned to face the congregation, holding his hand above his head and twisting it left and right, as if he were opening a lock. *Is there a key to this damn thing*? he mimed.

People started to laugh.

I felt my own face turning red, but, beside me, my father was perfectly still. In order to give an unobstructed view of the Torahs, there could be no center rail, and because there could be no center rail the door latches had to be situated at the tops of the doors. Another member of the congregation began motioning to Rabbi Blonsky to pull the doors from the top. Rabbi Blonsky saw the man but thought he was indicating that the key was on top of the ark, and so he began feeling around up there for a key that wasn't there to a lock that didn't exist.

Finally, the cantor reached up, pulled on the corner, and the door swung open. A few people clapped.

"Mazel tov!" someone called.

The cantor began singing again,

draped his prayer shawl back over his shoulder, and opened wide the ark's second door.

You really could see all the scrolls.

When the service ended, my father, instead of heading to the parking lot, stood with the rest of the congregation just outside the front doors. I stood with him, waiting for my mother to make her way outside. My father held his head up, his hands behind his back. He seemed proud. He wished a "*Gut Shabbos*" to some of our neighbors, who, surprised, returned the greeting and moved on, never mentioning the ark.

A woman named Mrs. Borgen came outside, kissed my mother on the cheek, and said how much she had enjoyed my uncle's book. My uncle was a famous rabbi who had written a popular guide to a happy marriage called "A Shrubbery of Evergreens."

"Yum, bum, biddy-biddy bum," said my father. He began to make his way to the end of the synagogue's driveway.

"He's going," I said to my mother.

"O.K.," said my mother, patting me on the back. "Go. Go."

God damn it, I thought.

My father and I silently walked home.

"What kind of a stupid rabbi can't open a door?" I finally said.

"Watch your mouth," he said.

"What did I say?"

"Just watch it."

Something had happened. Or maybe nothing happened. Maybe everything just seems better when you're little.

Yisroel was a different boy on Monday morning. He paid attention in class, and, if he didn't always have the answers, he also wasn't shooting spitballs and drawing cartoons in the margins of his Talmud. Outside class, though, he seemed defeated. He walked through the halls by himself, his head down and his hands in his pockets. At lunch, he sat alone. After lunch, we had a surprise Bible test. Ephraim got a ninety-eight and I got a ninety-six. Because we had received the two highest scores, Rabbi Napier had us hand the tests back to the rest of the students. As I handed Yisroel his test, I noticed that he had managed only a sixty-eight.

I felt sorry for Yisroel. Maybe he was ashamed of his poor test scores. Maybe the only thing anyone ever gave him credit for was his size and strength. Maybe he attacked other boys in the stairwell because this was all that was expected of him.

I stopped Yisroel on his way to the bus. "That was a hard test," I said.

Yisroel looked down at me and let his backpack slip from his shoulder.

"I mean, even Yermiyahu only got a ninety-two," I said. "And he has a photographic memory—"

Yisroel pushed me onto the ground, fell on top of me, and squeezed my balls.

"Yeahhhh . . ." he grunted, his sour breath filling my nostrils, his face only inches from mine. "Yeahhhh."

Rabbi Napier told us that after building his ark all Noah had to do was pray for the people of the world—just once—and God would have saved them all. But Noah didn't pray.

Maybe he was tired of trying to save them.

Maybe he wanted to watch them all drown.

Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and full of violence—and God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth."

I lay there on my back, pinned to the ground beneath the dull, grunting heap of Yisroel as he continued his assault, and I looked up—past his pasty cheek, past his oily *payes*, past his maroon-and-silver yarmulke, past the flat gray roof of the brown brick yeshiva building to the blackening sky above, where great, grave clouds quietly assembled, cracking their knuckles, punching their palms, and waiting. It looked, I hoped, like rain. ♦

MOST FASCINATING NEWS STORY OF THE WEEK

From the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.

In this photo released by Great Ape Trust of Iowa, Ron Andrews, left, of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources watches Brian Eldridge, middle, and Benjamin Beck of the Great Ape Trust, hold two trumpeter swans before releasing them on the Great Ape Trust grounds in Des Moines yesterday. A group of apes called bonobos will name the swans, whose offspring will be released in the wild.

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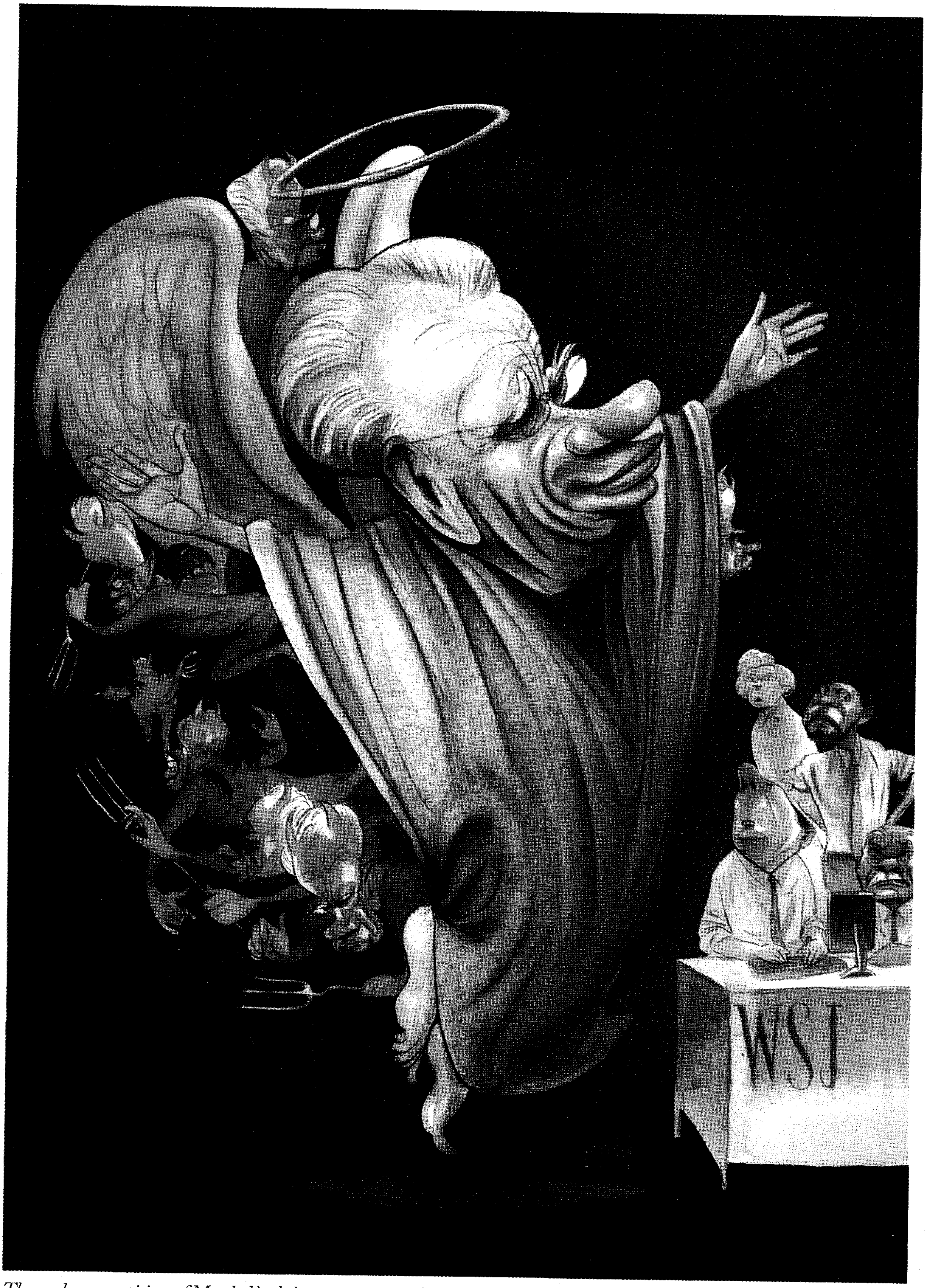


Those who are suspicious of Murdoch's pledges not to interfere recall what happened when he first expanded his press empire.

ANNALS OF COMMUNICATIONS

PROMISES, PROMISES

What might the Wall Street Journal become if Rupert Murdoch owned it?

BY KEN AULETTA

March was not the best of months for Richard F. Zannino, the C.E.O. of the Dow Jones Company, which owns the *Wall Street Journal.* Zannino joined the company six and a half years ago, after a career in the apparel industry, and his tailored suits and good looks set him apart from most people in the newspaper business. Until recently, Zannino assured his board of directors at Dow Jones that a resurgent *Wall Street Journal* would drive up advertising revenues, and that the stock price would follow. He believed that since becoming C.E.O., in February of 2006, he was rejuvenating a company whose revenues that year—$1.8 billion—were slightly less than they were in 1993, and he liked to say that under his control forty-five of its top eighty executives have been replaced or shifted; he promised that it would soon be clear that his team had transformed Dow Jones into "a more diversified, content-driven media company."

By March, however, Zannino knew that Dow Jones was unlikely to meet his forecast of eighteen-to-twenty-per-cent revenue growth for the year—without which there would be little cash to make investments in new media or technology. Profits would be siphoned to shareholders as dividends, a good portion of them earmarked for the various branches of the Bancroft family, which for more than a century has controlled Dow Jones. "I'm very proud of the progress we're making," Zannino told me not long ago. "At the same time, I'm focussed on putting new gas in the tank."

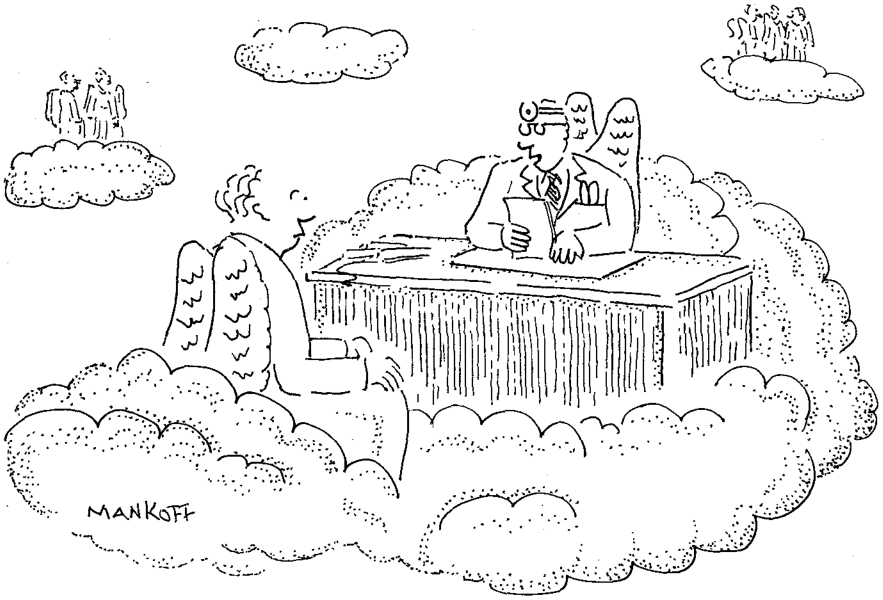
These pressures were bearing down on Zannino when he accepted an invitation from Rupert Murdoch to have breakfast on March 29th at the headquarters of the News Corporation, in midtown. The two men spent forty-five minutes or so talking about the media business until Murdoch, who can be alternately disarming or brusque, paused to look at Zannino, who, at forty-eight, is nearly thirty years his junior, and announced that he wanted to buy Dow Jones. He praised Zannino's management team, and said that he would want it to stay in place. Murdoch believed that News Corp. could help Dow Jones. It had cash—little debt, revenues of twenty-eight billion dollars, and assets valued at close to seventy billion dollars—and could strengthen the *Journal,* not just in America but worldwide. In addition, the *Journal* and Dow Jones Newswires could supply the content for Murdoch's soon-to-be-launched business cable network, as well as for the company's hundred-plus newspapers on three continents and its global television satellites; Dow Jones could use News Corp.'s growing digital empire, including MySpace, to distribute financial news. Murdoch said that he was prepared to pay sixty dollars a share for a stock that was trading at about thirty-six dollars a share.

Zannino was startled by the size of the offer, and when he returned to his office at 200 Liberty Street, across from Ground Zero, he reported on the conversation to the company's lawyers; to his predecessor, Peter R. Kann, who was retiring as chairman of the Dow Jones board in April, and with whom he had a frosty relationship; to the incoming chairman, M. Peter McPherson, a former president of Michigan State University; and to the senior trustee of the Bancroft family, Michael B. Elefante. Zannino knew that Murdoch had long expressed an interest in owning the *Journal* and that older members of the Bancroft clan disapproved of Murdoch's brand of journalism. What he didn't know was that in late 2006, according to the *Wall Street Journal,* Murdoch associates began to approach some members of the family to express his interest in acquiring their stock; the Bancrofts ignored the inquiry. Zannino refused to say what he thought of Murdoch's offer, but told me, "To be honest, we're all flattered by Murdoch's bid. We view it as a validation of the work we've done and how we've positioned the company in this digital age." He added, "The fact that he says he wants to keep the management team intact is another reason we feel it's a validation of what we're doing."

Murdoch made the proposal formal on April 17th. Several *Journal* editors, including Paul Steiger, the managing editor (the newsroom's top job), and Marcus Brauchli, who was about to succeed Steiger, learned of the bid but did not publish it in the paper. "What happened is that three of the most senior newspeople, including me, became aware that this was happening not in our role as journalists but in our role as executives," Steiger told me. "We're a small company. Most senior news executives are always involved in planning." He said that no one pressured his department to suppress the news.

The story broke two weeks later, on May 1st—on CNBC—and, at a meeting of the Dow Jones board that day, Zannino said that he offered a "fact-based" presentation of the pros and cons of selling. "I have been very careful not to advocate a position," he told me. "This is the family's call." His prospects for an independent Dow Jones seemed bleak, however, and, according to a board participant, one family board member, Elizabeth Steele, had tears in her eyes—she seemed convinced that the company was doomed. "He was a seller," the board participant said of Zannino. "He gave a terrible presentation. He was talking about what a disaster it would be if we didn't take this offer. And he overdid it. He's young. He should have seemed more balanced." At the conclusion of the meeting, this participant said, some board members, including McPherson, privately told Zannino that he was too

STEVE BRODNER



"Bad news—you're alive, so you have to go back down."

• •

negative. "We hired this guy because he said he could turn around this company," the participant complained to an associate, "and now he says it's hopeless." Zannino rejected this view. "I would not characterize my discussion as gloomy," he said, and denied that board members had told him he was too negative.

Murdoch believed that his offer was so generous that early potential rivals—the Washington Post Company, G.E. (which owns NBC), the McGraw-Hill Companies, Pearson (which owns the *Financial Times*), and Bloomberg L.P.—might express interest but were unlikely to compete seriously. (As it turned out, Pearson and G.E. flirted with an offer, but abandoned the idea late last week.) One investment banker who has been on the other side in negotiations with Murdoch recalls, "If we bid *x*, he bid *y*. He's insensitive to price. He just won't lose." Murdoch also knew that if Dow Jones rejected his offer the stock would plunge, and that, if the family accepted a lower bid from another buyer, shareholders could protest. There are twelve non-family-related members on the board, but the Bancrofts retain a majority of class-B shares, which have a ten-to-one voting power over class-A shares. "The family decides," a board participant told me.

Some members of the family and the board were astonished that Zannino would even meet with Murdoch, and they were furious that he seemed to favor Murdoch's offer, a view that is shared by some senior Dow Jones executives. ("I assume that he went to breakfast knowing that Murdoch was interested in the *Journal*," an important Murdoch adviser said of Zannino.) At first, the family announced its opposition to Murdoch, and, as it had the previous fall, refused to meet with him. This has been a consistent stance. In late 2003, when I talked to members of the family, they told me that if they were going to sell they preferred an organization like the Washington Post Company, and that Murdoch was the last person they would sell to.

But within Dow Jones there was both ambivalence and anger. "I have conflicting, competing worries, and conflicting, competing hopes," Steiger told me on May 15th, the day that he turned over his office to Brauchli. He worried that Dow Jones was too small, and Murdoch too big; he hoped that the *Journal* could stay independent, but feared it could not; he hoped that News Corp. could provide the resources that Dow Jones needed, but feared that Murdoch might find it irresistible to interfere in *Journal* coverage. "I'd be praying—if I knew what to pray for," Steiger said. Sixty *Journal* reporters were more certain, and wrote to the Bancroft family to warn that Murdoch would subvert the paper's independence.

The *Journal* demonstrated that independence with two recent front-page stories. The first, on June 2nd, explored the competence, confusion, and disarray of the Bancrofts. The second, on June 5th, examined the half-century career of Murdoch and concluded that "his newspapers and other media outlets have made coverage decisions that advanced the interests of his sprawling media conglomerate, News Corp. In the process, Mr. Murdoch has blurred a line that exists at many other U.S. media companies between business and news sides—a line intended to keep the business and political interests of owners from influencing the presentation of news."

If Murdoch was bad for journalism, however, he was clearly good for business. He had built News Corp. into the world's third-largest media company (behind Time Warner and Disney), with divisions that offset his newspapers' declining sales. By contrast, Dow Jones had suffered from decades of management that encouraged good journalism but did not protect the business that employed its journalists. Under two former journalists who rose to become C.E.O., Warren Phillips and Peter Kann, the company made notable missteps: it failed to acquire the Financial News Network (which became the lucrative CNBC); failed to purchase or keep stakes in two companies that became cable giants, Comcast and Cablevision; and failed spectacularly when it spent $1.6 billion to acquire Telerate, a financial-data company that it eventually sold for one-third the purchase price. In hopeful moments, the newsroom believed that News Corp. and Murdoch were professionals, and might somehow rescue the *Journal* from its financial decline.

As the narrative of battle proceeded, Murdoch deployed his charm. He sent an e-mail to Steiger on April 20th, assuring him of his high regard for the news operation that Steiger had led since 1992; of the positive things he had heard about Brauchli; and of his belief in maintaining the wall between opinion and news. The e-mail, Steiger said, seemed meant to insure that he "would not lead some newsroom jihad" against Murdoch. (The e-mail seemed to assume that Steiger knew about a bid that hadn't yet been announced, but Steiger doesn't know if or how Murdoch knew this.) Murdoch later declared that it would be "bad business" to risk the *Journal's* record of "journalistic independence and integrity." He professed to be "a great admirer" of the Bancrofts and said that he would like "the privilege of meeting the Bancroft family," and for them to meet his. He vowed to appoint a Bancroft to the News Corp. board. He said that he would be willing to establish an independent board to assure that editors were free from his whims—promises he has made, and broken, elsewhere.

What Murdoch didn't volunteer is other reasons he has for wanting to own the *Journal.* Whatever his commercial successes, he has never produced a great newspaper, and he seems to value even a trophy property like the *Times* of London less for its prestige than for its influence—its power to help sway elections, to promote his political ideas, and to protect his corporate interests. "I wonder how many even of his admirers would argue that Mr. Murdoch, for all his successes, has created even one serious, authoritative and truly independent newspaper," the columnist Martin Wolf wrote recently in the *Financial Times,* alluding to Murdoch's ownership of four national newspapers. "Mr. Murdoch can take substantial credit for the tide of vulgarity that now floods the U.K."

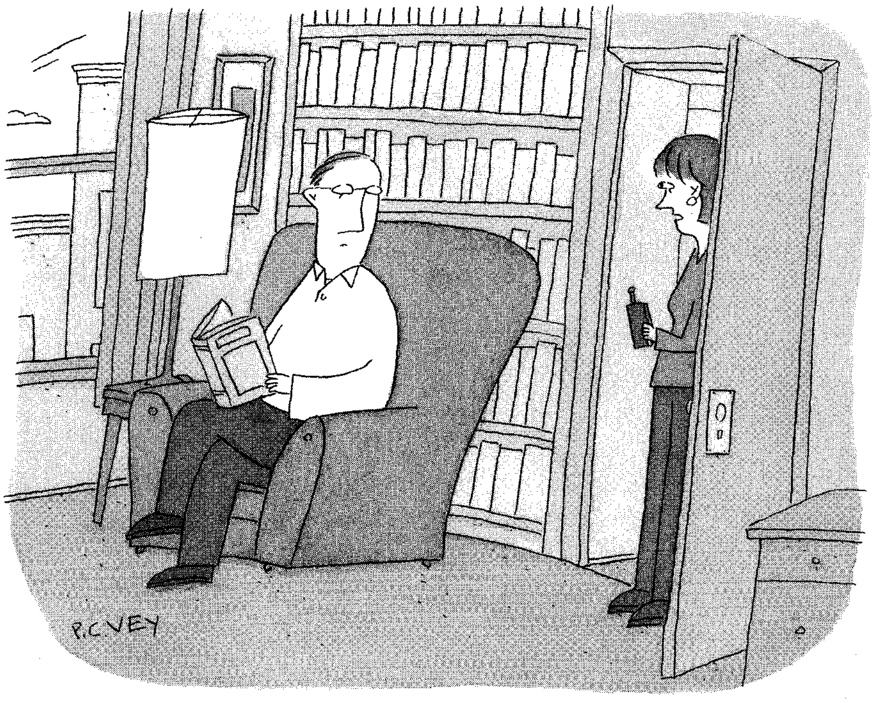
On May 31st, the Bancroft family reversed itself and agreed to meet with Murdoch, issuing a statement that said, in part, "The mission of Dow Jones may be better accomplished in combination or collaboration with another organization, which may include News Corp." A crucial factor in turning the family around, according to a board participant, was Elizabeth Steele, the family member who had nearly wept at Zannino's presentation on May 1st. During board conference calls, the members discussed who should attend the session with Murdoch, to be held at the Manhattan offices of the family's legal adviser, Martin Lipton, of Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen & Katz. Michael Elefante said that he and the three family representatives—Christopher Bancroft, Leslie Hill, and Steele—should attend, along with the board's chairman, McPherson. McPherson suggested that Zannino should be included.

"That's not what we had in mind," Elefante responded, according to the board participant. Elefante decided that no one from management would attend. "I read it that Elefante and the family are not happy with Rich," the participant said.

At the meeting, which took place on June 4th, Murdoch was joined by his son James, who is thirty-four, the C.E.O. of British-based BSkyB, and by his counsel and chief financial officer. The four-hour session reportedly did not address what News Corp. would pay for or invest in Dow Jones. Instead, discussion focussed on whether Murdoch could be trusted to keep his distance from news coverage, and what kind of independent board could assure this. The Bancrofts wanted a board that the family would control in perpetuity, with the power to hire and fire the editors and the publishers, and leverage to protect employees from Murdoch—an extraordinary proposition. It is a measure of Murdoch's discipline that he did not explode at the implication that he was some sort of uncaged vulgarian or at the idea that the Bancrofts would control the paper after selling it. Instead, Murdoch said—gently, by all accounts—that he could not invest five billion dollars of his shareholders' money in order to become a mere spectator. He proposed a board like the one he had established for the *Times* of London and the *Sunday Times,* where of the fifteen members only seven have no ties to News Corp., and where he can theoretically hire or fire the editor only with the assent of the board.

In London, the *Times* board rarely meets, and is reliant for much of its information on Murdoch. In an interview with two *Journal* reporters, Steve Stecklow and Martin Peers, excerpts of which were published on June 5th, Murdoch not only made clear that he wanted a similar arrangement—one that permitted the board to "interview the editor before he's appointed"—but insisted that the board could not get into "business judgments," including newsroom budgets, as the Bancrofts were proposing. Murdoch said that he would countenance a board that had "absolutely no business connections to me." What he would not consider was a board appointed by the Bancrofts. "The family's selling out," he said. "They can't sell and keep it."

No outside board can tame any owner, a former *Sunday Times* investigative reporter, Bruce Page, told me. "Newspapers are like ships," he said. "They are real-time systems. You must make your



"Your mother just wants to let you know that she's finally over her postpartum depression."

decisions. It is better to have bad decisions rather than no decisions. You can't have the captain of the ship appointed by people onshore, and fire him when he comes back to shore." Murdoch and the Bancrofts agreed to keep talking.

In 1995, I spent several months reporting for a Profile of Murdoch for *The New Yorker.* During ten days in his offices, I attended meetings, witnessed negotiations, listened to his phone calls, and conducted about twenty hours of taped interviews with him. At least a couple of times each day, he talked on the phone with an editor in order to suggest a story based on something that he'd heard. This prompted me to ask, "Of all the things in your business empire, what gives you the most pleasure?"

"Being involved with the editor of a paper in a day-to-day campaign," he answered instantly. "Trying to influence people."

I portrayed Murdoch then as a visionary who could make a large company move with the speed of a small one. I also saw him as a modern pirate, a press lord in the tradition of men like James Gordon Bennett, who created the New York *Herald* in 1835 and also became an adviser to politicians; or William Randolph Hearst, Henry Luce, and Lord Beaverbrook, who used their properties to try to influence events throughout the last century. Murdoch's power and influence, though, reach far beyond one nation. Murdoch was unhappy with the article, and although he is unfailingly polite in person, he has since declined to sit for an interview with me.

Those who are suspicious of Murdoch's pledges of noninterference recall what happened when he first extended his press holdings beyond his native Australia, nearly forty years ago: he persuaded the Carr family of London to sell him the sensational tabloid *News of the World,* and promised to run the paper in partnership with the family that had owned the paper for nearly eighty years; he abandoned this pledge after learning, he said, that to honor it would harm shareholders because the Carrs had created "a total wreck of a company." When he bought the New York *Post* from Dorothy Schiff, in 1976, he publicly pledged to leave its liberal editorial stance unchanged, saying, "The New York *Post* will continue to serve New York and New Yorkers and maintain its present policies and traditions"—and promptly reversed course. But Murdoch's approach may best be seen in what happened after he bought the influential and once storied *Times* of London and the *Sunday Times,* in 1981. At the time, English journalists asked their Australian-born colleague Phillip Knightley to analyze how Murdoch might behave, and as Knightley now recalls, "The point I made was that Murdoch came from a tradition very different from European and American proprietors. In Australia, a proprietor owned the paper and considered it was his to do whatever he liked with it. Proprietors used their newspapers to support or oppose political parties, settle private feuds, and cross-promote their other interests. Any idea that they could not do this would have met with bewilderment."

"I can't believe that I'm late for my own execution."

Within a year of acquiring the papers and promising not to interfere in the editorial operations, Murdoch fired Harold Evans as the editor of the *Times* and transformed the paper into an often-partisan voice on behalf of Margaret Thatcher. Evans had been the twelfth editor at the *Times* in nearly two hundred years; Murdoch hired and fired five editors in his first eleven years. Evans, in his 1983 memoir, "Good Times, Bad Times," wrote, "The most charitable explanation of Murdoch's attitude to a promise was that he meant it when he made it; only circumstances changed."

Bruce Page, who left the *Sunday Times* before Murdoch took control, and who wrote the 2003 book "The Murdoch Archipelago," said, "Rupert is a very kind man personally. He bailed out old war correspondents who have hit hard times. He has great charm, in a certain dry way. There's a lot to be said for Rupert Murdoch the man. There's nothing to be said for Rupert Murdoch the journalist."

Murdoch does deserve credit for modernizing England's newspaper industry and weaning it from wasteful union work rules. When he took over the daily *Times,* it was losing money; it still is, yet he keeps it alive. The *Times* is not nearly the paper that it was in 1981—stories are increasingly cursory, there is more crime and celebrity news, and since 2004 it has been printed in tabloid format—but it is still a respectable newspaper, as is the *Australian,* which Murdoch launched as that country's first national newspaper, in 1964, and which didn't earn a profit for twenty years. Neither publication, though, can compare to the *Wall Street Journal,* one of the best news-

LIKE A PRISONER OF SOFT WORDS

We walk under the wires and the birds resettle.
We know where we're going but have not made up our mind
which way we will take to get there.
If we pass by the palmist's she can read our wayward lines.
We may drop things along the way that substantiate our having been here.
We will not be able to transmit any of these feelings verbatim.
By the time we reach the restaurant one of us is angry.
Here a door gives in to a courtyard
overlooking a ruined pool.
We suspect someone has followed one or the other of us.
We touch the spot on our shirt where the ink has seeped.
The lonely outline of the host is discerned near an unlit sconce.
As guests we are authorized not to notice.
We drop some cash on the tablecloth.
We lack verisimilitude but we press on with intense resolve.
At the border, under a rim of rock, the footbridge.
Salt cedars have grown over the path.
The water table is down.
And we cannot see who is coming, the pollos and their pollero,
the migra, the mules, the Minutemen, the women
who wash for the other women al otro lado.
Or the murdered boy herding his goats after school. 6:27,
the fell of dark, not day.

—*C. D. Wright*

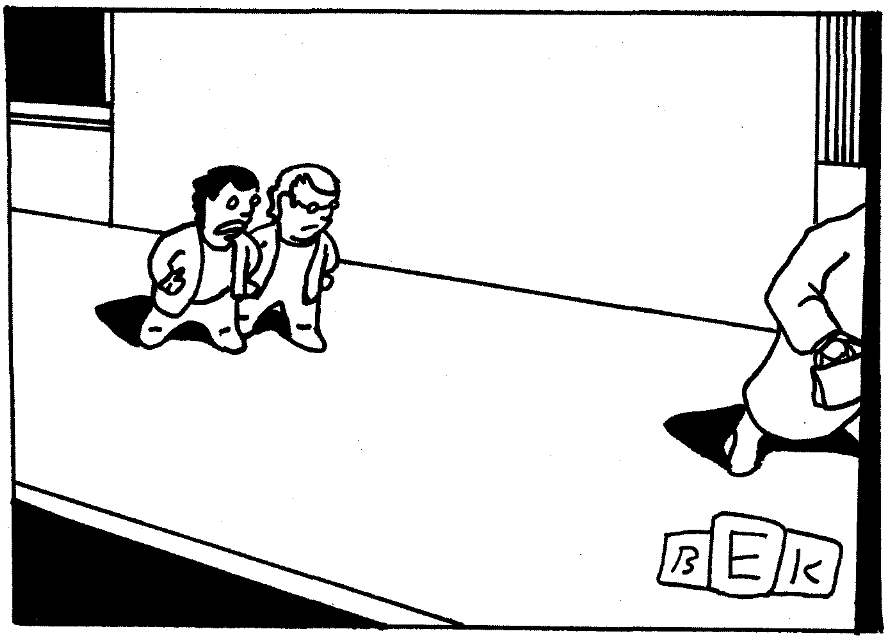
papers in the world. And because the *Australian* and the *Times* are so unlike typical Murdoch newspapers—tabloids like the *Post* in New York and the *Sun* in London—neither really represents his dominant brand of journalism. Some of his tabloids print photographs of topless women. His Fox network pioneered tabloid television, in 1986, with "A Current Affair." He personally agreed to publish O. J. Simpson's "If I Did It" (in which Simpson teasingly seemed to confess to a double murder), along with a two-part, two-hour Simpson interview on Fox—and then cancelled it all when the public outcry became too loud for commercial comfort. Fox News's "fair and balanced" slogan is more marketing ploy than conviction. The *Journal* "will become more populist," Alan Rusbridger, the editor of the *Guardian* in London, predicts. "All his papers do."

The prospect of a Murdoch takeover of the *Wall Street Journal* has already produced repercussions at the paper. According to a recent Pew Research Center poll, Americans consider the *Journal* their most credible newspaper. Yet a senior executive at the paper says, "Even before anything happens, there has been so much publicity about this that there are issues with our readers and advertisers. . . . We don't yet know how best to deal with that issue, or how big an issue it is."

In addition, the departure of some of the *Journal's* talent may ensue. There are fewer opportunities in journalism than there once were, but the best writers, reporters, and senior editors will not find it difficult to move elsewhere. Editors at the New York *Times,* Time, Inc., and Bloomberg have already talked to prospective recruits from the *Journal.* Murdoch, however, believes that all talent is replaceable. To try to forestall a Murdoch takeover of *New York* magazine thirty years ago, about forty writers and editors and art directors went on strike. I was at the magazine then, and, with delusions that I was on a diplomatic mission, led a small delegation to visit Murdoch's outside counsel, Howard Squadron. I was certain that, once Murdoch understood that the staff would leave, he would retreat. Squadron listened politely, and replied, "You don't understand. If you leave, Rupert will replace you like he replaces furniture."

Murdoch has said that he wants to improve the European and Asian editions of the *Journal,* expand the Washington bureau, invest more in marketing the paper, and boost digital ventures in order to locate "new business models to get revenues." In the interview with Stecklow and Peers, published in its entirety on the *Journal's* Web site, he said that he would consider making WSJ.com—one of the few successful subscription models (it has nine hundred thousand subscribers paying up to a hundred dollars annually)—free, because "you'd have ten times as many visitors and let's say five times as much advertising." In the interview, Murdoch said of the newsroom, "I'd love to wander around. I'm not going to have much time to do it. I find people quite like it if I show an interest in their work." He also said, "I'm quite ashamed. I enjoy popular journalism. I must say I enjoy it more than what you would call quality journalism." Journalists love the sense that the boss cares about their work, but *Journal* reporters have every reason to suspect that Murdoch's journalistic sensibility is not theirs.

Murdoch's offer comes at a time of embarrassment elsewhere in News Corp. Last month, the *Post* admitted that Richard Johnson, its Page Six editor, had accepted a thousand-dollar gift from a New York restaurateur whose establishment often appeared on Page Six, and had also accepted a fifty-thousand-dollar bachelor party in Mexico hosted by Joe Francis, of "Girls Gone Wild" video fame. Ian Spiegelman, who worked as a Page Six reporter for four years, swore in a recent affidavit that "accepting freebies, graft and other favors was not only condoned by the company but encouraged as a way to decrease" expenses; that he "was ordered to kill a Page Six story about a Chinese diplomat and strip club that would have angered the Communist regime and endangered Murdoch's broadcasting privileges" in China; and that "Page Six was ordered to kill unflattering stories about Hillary and Bill Clinton on numerous occasions." A spokesman for the *Post*



"There's so much pressure to like monkeys."

• •

said that Johnson had been "reprimanded"; he suggested that some of the charges might be true, but labelled others "a lie," while refusing to specify which were lies.

It is difficult to imagine any of these transgressions being dealt with in the same way at a newspaper like the *Journal.* It is likewise difficult to imagine how Murdoch would have reacted to the *Journal's* coverage in the nineteen-eighties and nineties of his friend Michael Milken, who went to jail for securities fraud. The former *Journal* managing editor Norman Pearlstine, who presided over the Milken coverage (which won a Pulitzer Prize), is ambivalent about Murdoch owning the newspaper; he respects the investment and business strategies he might institute, but of Murdoch's journalistic conscience he says, "That's the question. I don't know. And I don't know whether Rupert at seventy-six is the same as Rupert at fifty-one."

Murdoch at sixty-three used the New York *Post* to punish federal judge Kimba Wood for sentencing Milken to a ten-year prison term. In 1995, when diary entries referring to Wood were discovered in the divorce proceeding of the man who would become her second husband, the *Post* was gleeful in its coverage, nicknaming her the "Love Judge." Murdoch relished both the story and, he told me at the time, the resultant payback. "She put my friend in jail for ten years," he said. (Actually, Milken served two years.) The tabloids are different, Murdoch likes to say, and he doesn't hesitate to use the *Post* to belittle his business opponents (*Post* headline: "TED TURNER: IS HE NUTS?"), or political adversaries like Edward Kennedy (Murdoch's Boston *Herald* headline: "FAT BOY").

Murdoch has never been shy about trying to shape news coverage to satisfy his business or ideological interests. Harold Evans, in his memoir, said that Murdoch persistently derided certain British politicians, or sent him articles with a strong conservative point of view, marked "worth reading!," or jabbed at headlines, or chastised Evans for not showing more "conviction," which Evans took to mean that he should show more support for Thatcher. The *News of the World* and *Times* columnist Woodrow Wyatt was a friend to both Murdoch and Thatcher. After Wyatt's death, in 1997, three volumes of his diaries were published, and though he said that Murdoch was so busy that "he doesn't have time" to "interfere much with his editors," he recounted that Murdoch "altered some of the headlines" in the *Times* (telling Wyatt, "I'm not supposed to interfere of course").

James Hoge, Jr., the editor of *Foreign Affairs* and a former editor of the Chicago *Sun-Times* and former publisher of the New York *Daily News*, says the danger is that "Murdoch may want to ignore some news if it is against his business interests," as he did in 1996, when his publishing house HarperCollins cancelled a book by Chris Patten, the last British governor of Hong Kong, a man loathed by the Chinese government. "If you cancel a book by Chris Patten, everyone gets the message," Hoge said.

Murdoch's business relations with China—and the coverage of China by the Murdoch press—have been especially questionable. In 1993, when he bought Star TV, he called advances in technology a "threat to totalitarian regimes everywhere," an assertion that angered the Chinese government, helping prompt a virtual ban on individual ownership of satellite dishes in China. In the case of Star, the threat to the Chinese regime turned out to be more notional than real. To show his contrition, in 1994, after China complained about coverage by the BBC—in particular, a documentary about Mao Zedong that took note of Mao's unorthodox sex life—Murdoch dropped the service from Star, and substituted a Mandarin-language film channel. Two years later, Star established a joint venture—Phoenix satellite TV—with a Chinese broadcaster close to the government, and in another act of contrition a Murdoch company published and fêted a mediocre book by a daughter of Deng Xiaoping.

Murdoch insisted to the *Financial Times* in May that the decision to drop the BBC "was driven by commercial considerations," and not by a "request from anybody in China." At the time, however, the authorities' displeasure was well known. "The BBC was driving them nuts," Murdoch had told me. "It's not worth it. . . . We're not proud of that decision." Not surprisingly, the *Journal's* Pulitzer Prize-winning reporting team in China has publicly expressed alarm at the prospect of a Murdoch takeover of Dow Jones, saying in a letter to the Bancroft family that Murdoch "has a well-documented history of making editorial decisions in order to advance his business interests in China."

Matt Pottinger, a former reporter in

China for the *Journal,* who is now serving with the Marines in Iraq, recently wrote an Op-Ed piece for the Washington *Post* in which he recounted that in 2003, when the Chinese government was denying the existence of a deadly SARS virus that could prompt a worldwide pandemic, Murdoch's Phoenix TV network did what "any other obedient Chinese news agency would have done: nothing." And when, in 1999, a NATO warplane mistakenly bombed the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, Pottinger wrote, "I saw Murdoch's reporters at Phoenix TV use the event to fuel an anti-American propaganda orgy while hesitating to report the Clinton Administration's apology."

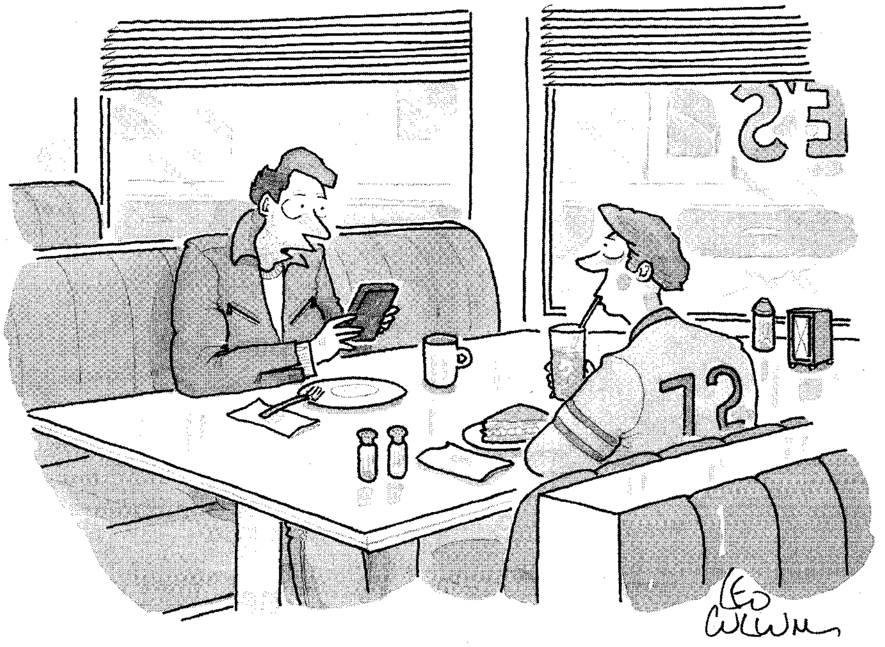
Jim Ottaway, Jr., is the former chairman of Ottaway Newspapers. His father sold the family's chain to Dow Jones in 1970, and Ottaway, Jr., served as a senior vice-president until 2003 and as a board member until he retired, in 2006; today, he owns or controls 6.2 per cent of the restricted class-B Dow Jones stock, making him the largest voting shareholder outside the Bancroft family. Principally because of Murdoch's actions in China, Ottaway has campaigned against Murdoch's ownership. The company under Peter Kann didn't flinch, he said, when the Chinese objected to stories published by the *Asian Wall Street Journal,* or Singapore banned Dow Jones publications for seven years. The *Journal's* editorial page has been an eloquent and persistent voice on behalf of human rights in China, while Murdoch and his son James have publicly defended the authoritarian regime. (In 2001, James characterized coverage in the Western media of human-rights issues as "destabilizing forces" that are "very, very dangerous for the Chinese government.") An acquisition by Murdoch, Ottaway said, "would not be a good thing for Dow Jones, for the *Wall Street Journal,* for American journalism, or for the integrity of business and financial news in America, upon which our free markets rely."

Robert Thomson, the editor of the *Times* of London, disagreed with Ottaway, writing a public letter in which he defended his paper's objectivity and respect for the wall between business and news, and enumerated the critical coverage of China in its own pages. Ottaway wrote back, "If you are given editorial independence by Mr. Murdoch and he is not censoring news reports in the *Times* of London that might damage his business interests, that is a good thing for better journalism in Britain. But it is not his practice, past or present, at other major Murdoch publications and broadcast services." A senior editor at the *Journal* pointed out that the *Times* of London, unlike the *Journal,* "doesn't circulate heavily in China, so Chinese authorities don't worry about what it says."

If Murdoch really intends to change the *Journal,* the former Washington *Post* executive editor Benjamin Bradlee observed, he must install "an editor that thinks like him and has the same goals." The editor, he added, controls story assignments, whether a story runs or not, and whether it is followed up. Or the editor can be put under pressure from Murdoch on a controversial story—an example of which occurred, according to the *Journal,* in *Sunday Times* coverage of a British company that was prepared to bribe Malaysian officials in order to win a construction contract. Murdoch asked the editor, "Are you sure of your facts? Have you gotten a smoking gun here?" and complained that the story was "boring people."

According to Norman Pearlstine, Murdoch might hire an editor whose conservative political instincts were "in sync with his own"—as Fox News hired the conservative John Moody from *Time* to be its news chief—or he could turn to the editorial-page editor, Paul Gigot, "who was a first-rate reporter before he went to the editorial page." John Carroll, a former editor of the Baltimore *Sun* and the Los Angeles *Times,* described how an owner can affect an editor's life: "An editor who is too hard-charging might find himself in another part of the paper, like the copy desk." He added, "If the owner's priority is compliance, ultimately you get a flat newspaper. Unfortunately, most people hunker down and adjust. But the spark goes out. The editor who has spark will be gone, or will change his ways and compromise. The compromises that one is asked to make are very often not stark decisions between right and wrong. They are incremental."

Murdoch is certainly not the only newspaper owner who wants to be comfortable with his editors and the contents of his newspaper. Arthur Sulzberger, Jr., the chairman of the New York Times Company, and Donald Graham, the chairman of the Washington Post Company, among others, are closely involved with many decisions. "It's in choosing editors that Arthur gets what he wants," observed Daniel Okrent, who was the *Times'* first Public Editor. "And not just the executive editor, Bill Keller. I don't think Keller would pick,



"She's texting me, but I think she's also subtexting me."

say, a foreign editor that Arthur did not approve of. Also, any executive editor of the New York *Times* knows that among the things Arthur cares about most are race and gender equality." The Washington *Post* has been committed to certain issues—racial equality and gun control laws, among others—and these views have been reflected throughout the paper since it was purchased by Graham's grandfather, Eugene Meyer, in 1933. But Okrent also pointed out that the publishers of the *Times*—or the *Journal* or the Washington *Post*—do not intrude as Murdoch has.

Phillip Knightley believes that Murdoch has been less intrusive with his British newspapers in recent years because he is comfortable with his editors. "He has said he never interferes with his editors' editorial decisions," Knightley said. "Absolutely true, because he is careful to choose editors whose views agree with his." And these views don't have to be spelled out. Alan Rusbridger, the editor of the *Guardian,* said of Murdoch, "I believe his 'upmarket' editors when they say they've never been told what to say by Murdoch. He doesn't need to tell them. On sensitive subjects—China, Europe, endorsing particular parties or candidates—they don't have to ask. They know. It's auto-editing, or osmosis, rather than overtly directional."

In the mid-nineties, when Murdoch was negotiating with Congress to fend off a challenge to his Fox station licenses brought by the N.A.A.C.P. and NBC, HarperCollins signed a $4.5-million, two-book contract with Speaker Newt Gingrich, one of the largest advances ever for a current officeholder. (Gingrich, embarrassed by the attention, said he would accept no advance and would take only royalties.) Murdoch denied knowledge of the contract, but William Shinker, a former publisher at HarperCollins, was clear about what Murdoch wanted. "Rupert would accuse me on several occasions of not publishing enough conservative books," Shinker told me in 1995. "He'd joke, 'You're all a bunch of pinkos.' But he never told me to buy one of them. Or how much to pay." When Murdoch endorsed Edward I. Koch for mayor of New York, in 1977, his support spilled over onto the news pages of the *Post*, with the paper regularly publishing glowing stories about Koch and sometimes savage accounts of his four primary opponents. After the election, fifty of the sixty reporters on the paper signed a petition of protest to Murdoch. (Koch has often said that without Murdoch's support he would not have been elected.)

In most newsrooms, John Carroll said, "there are some leaders, but the majority are followers. The majority lines up like iron filings to a magnet." When Murdoch says, as he has, that he is "sometimes frustrated by the long stories" in the *Journal,* editors are likely to hear only that "the boss wants shorter stories." Carroll also said, "You shouldn't underestimate the power of repeatedly expressed opinions from corporate headquarters. At the Los Angeles *Times*, certain columnists and reporters were repeatedly questioned by the corporation. Most of it was not said to me, but quite a bit was said to the publisher, who insulated me a lot. If I were more pliable, they could have said it to me. They would say, 'The editor was too negative. He's not loyal. He's not a team player.' An editor's sanity depends on having a good publisher run interference and shield him. The publisher is the most important person in an editor's life."

The right publisher would help Murdoch achieve the business synergies he wants, chief among these being to link the *Journal* to the new Fox business-news cable channel. This would make it a strong competitor with CNBC, the leading financial-news channel. CNBC now has a contract with the *Journal* to supply business news—an arrangement that Murdoch would almost certainly try to end. Under the contract with CNBC, a senior *Wall Street Journal* executive told me, there are "some shows you will not see a *Journal* reporter on," including Jim Cramer's shout-fest, "Mad Money," and there is a worry that, under Murdoch, there would be little hesitation to use *Journal* reporters on air, regardless of the format. There is an equal concern that *Journal* reporters would feel pressure to adopt Murdoch's vision of a "more business-friendly" network.

Perhaps surprisingly, the *Journal's* conservative opinion page seems more worried than the main newsroom about its continued independence. "The editorial page is highly ideological but not partisan," the senior *Wall Street Journal*

Victoria Roberts

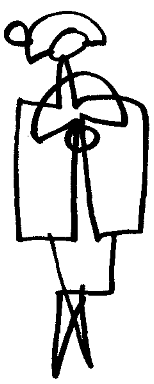
"If you let down your guard, I'll walk over the moat."

executive said. (The last Presidential candidate the paper endorsed was Herbert Hoover.) Those who work on the page, he said, worry that Murdoch is not a true conservative but, rather, an "opportunist." They point to an absence of consistency, such as he showed in the U.K. when he went from supporting Margaret Thatcher to Tony Blair. The *Post* in recent years has been relatively gentle with Hillary Clinton, but the *Journal's* editorial page has been harsh in its treatment of the Clintons, especially during the period of the Whitewater investigations. Editorial pages have always had a special allure for Murdoch.

On June 6th, the editorial page sent an unambiguous message to Murdoch in an editorial entitled, "An Independent Newspaper." The essay, which filled almost the entire editorial space, reviewed with pride the paper's hundred-year history of operating free of the editorial intrusions of the Bancroft family. It noted that this freedom made the *Journal* different from the New York *Times* and the Washington *Post*, where family members "run those newspapers," or from the publications owned by Murdoch, who also imposes "the same lack of independence" on his newspapers. The editorial made the curious assertion that the Sulzbergers or the Grahams are just as guilty of intrusion as Murdoch. And it quoted from a 1951 *Journal* editorial that declared, "We are not much interested in labels but if we were to choose one, we would say we are radical.... Even 56 years later, that still sounds good to us. Whether the Bancroft family sells or not, and no matter who is the buyer, we plan to stand for those beliefs for as long into the future as we are able." It seemed ironic that America's foremost cheerleaders of capitalism were asking for protection from the prerogatives of private ownership.

Peter Kann, who was a champion of the editorial page, is not anti-Murdoch but, rather, anti-sale. He explained his position to me this way: "Yes, Dow Jones is a relatively small company in a world of very big media companies. But I don't think bigger is inevitably better. I think you can survive and thrive as a moderate-sized media company if you keep your focus." He recognized the advantages of calling upon the resources of a corporate parent like News Corp., but also said, "I know the *Wall Street Journal* is the flagship of Dow Jones, and is likely to remain so, even if it is not the strongest business in the company. As a public trust, it sits in the center of Dow Jones. And I'm not sure where it would sit in Gannett, or Google, or News Corp."

Kann's friend Jim Ottaway frets about the impact of concentrated media ownership on Americans' ability to sample diverse opinions. On the day that the Bancroft-family representatives went to their pivotal meeting with Murdoch, Ottaway told me, "I'm in mourning." He believed that the Bancrofts seemed determined to sell to Murdoch and were looking for "a fig-leaf solution to make the family feel better for selling the family jewel to Rupert Murdoch." He had no expectation that any serious rival bidder would appear. He thought that too many in the family were marvelling at the price Murdoch was willing to pay, and forgetting the journalistic price that the *Journal* might pay. "I feel like my life's work has just gone down the drain," he said.



With Pearson and G.E. out of the bidding, it is widely believed that Murdoch and his News Corp. will remain the sole serious buyer. The Dow Jones union has tried to solicit other bidders, but none have the resources to compete with News Corp., and some are no more attractive than Murdoch. Meanwhile, the attitude of journalists and executives at the company seemed to be shifting. The unappetizing reality was that only three options remained, none of them good: sell to Murdoch; sell to someone else, who hasn't yet emerged; or refuse to sell, and watch the stock plummet. If Murdoch wins, they feared his "meddling," in the words of one senior editor, but also knew that he would pay in cash and had promised to expand Dow Jones. If there were another serious bid—for instance, from a financial or news competitor—the result could be severe cuts in overlapping costs. And, if Dow Jones didn't sell, executives would feel great pressure to make reductions in order to boost the stock.

With such calculations, the hopes of journalists at the paper began to override their knowledge of Murdoch's nature. One signal that a sale was likely came in early June, when the Dow Jones board approved extending severance payments to more than a hundred top executives in case a new owner fires them within two years. (Zannino's total package was reported at about twenty-five million dollars.) Some *Journal* reporters took to answering their phones with gallows humor and an Australian accent: "News Corp."

By the third week in June, the Bancrofts were still divided and still confused. They had not sent to Murdoch new ideas on how to constitute an independent board, because they could not agree among themselves. (One draft proposal, reported by Dean Starkman in the *Columbia Journalism Review,* sought to guarantee the jobs of four key people: Crovitz, Brauchli, Gigot, and Neal Lipshutz, the managing editor of Dow Jones Newswires.) Reflecting a view increasingly common at the paper, a *Journal* editor said that the newsroom was now fearful that Murdoch and any other potential bidders would simply drift away. The board of directors had somewhat different worries. They feared that if the family continued to delay, or even rejected Murdoch, the directors might be liable to shareholders.

At their regular monthly meeting on June 20th, the independent directors asserted themselves—allowing a five-person committee to replace the Bancrofts in any negotiations about a sale. The family will be represented by the trustee Elefante, along with McPherson, the chairman; Harvey Golub, the chairman of the Campbell Soup Company; Lewis B. Campbell, the chairman and C.E.O. of Textron; and Zannino, back from temporary exile. "What this says to me is that negotiations are likely to pick up speed," a senior executive at the *Journal* said. The significance of this, a board participant noted, is that now the negotiators don't "just represent the family. They represent all shareholders." Perhaps the divided Bancrofts will once more muster the votes to deny Murdoch, but, for the first time, the family must deal with twelve independent directors who are as determined to seek a resolution as Murdoch. ♦

A REPORTER AT LARGE

DUPED

Can brain scans uncover lies?

BY MARGARET TALBOT

The most egregious liar I ever knew was someone I never suspected until the day that, suddenly and irrevocably, I did. Twelve years ago, a young man named Stephen Glass began writing for *The New Republic*, where I was an editor. He quickly established himself as someone who was always onto an amusingly outlandish story—like the time he met some Young Republican types at a convention, gathered them around a hotel-room minibar, then, with guileless ferocity, captured their boorishness in print. I liked Steve; most of us who worked with him did. A baby-faced guy from suburban Chicago, he padded around the office in his socks. Before going on an errand, Steve would ask if I wanted a muffin or a sandwich; he always noticed a new scarf or a clever turn of phrase, and asked after a colleague's baby or spouse. When he met with editors to talk about his latest reporting triumph, he was self-effacing and sincere. He'd look us in the eye, wait for us to press him for details, and then, without fidgeting or mumbling, supply them.

One day, the magazine published an article by Steve about a teen-ager so diabolically gifted at hacking into corporate computer networks that C.E.O.s paid him huge sums just to stop messing with them. A reporter for the online edition of *Forbes* was assigned to chase down the story. You can see how Steve's journalism career unravelled if you watch the movie "Shattered Glass": *Forbes* challenged the story's veracity, and Steve—after denying the charges, concocting a fake Web site, and enlisting his brother to pose as a victimized C.E.O.—finally confessed that he'd made up the whole thing. Editors and reporters at the magazine investigated, and found that Steve had been inventing stories for at least a year. The magazine disavowed twenty-seven articles.

After Steve's unmasking, my colleagues and I felt ashamed of our gullibility. But maybe we shouldn't have. Human beings are terrible lie detectors. In academic studies, subjects asked to distinguish truth from lies answer correctly, on average, fifty-four per cent of the time. They are better at guessing when they are being told the truth than when they are being lied to, accurately classifying only forty-seven per cent of lies, according to a recent meta-analysis of some two hundred deception studies, published by Bella DePaulo, of the University of California at Santa Barbara, and Charles Bond, Jr., of Texas Christian University. Subjects are often led astray by an erroneous sense of how a liar behaves. "People hold a stereotype of the liar—as tormented, anxious, and conscience-stricken," DePaulo and Bond write. (The idea that a liar's anxiety will inevitably become manifest can be found as far back as the ancient Greeks, Demosthenes in particular.) In fact, many liars experience what deception researchers call "duping delight."

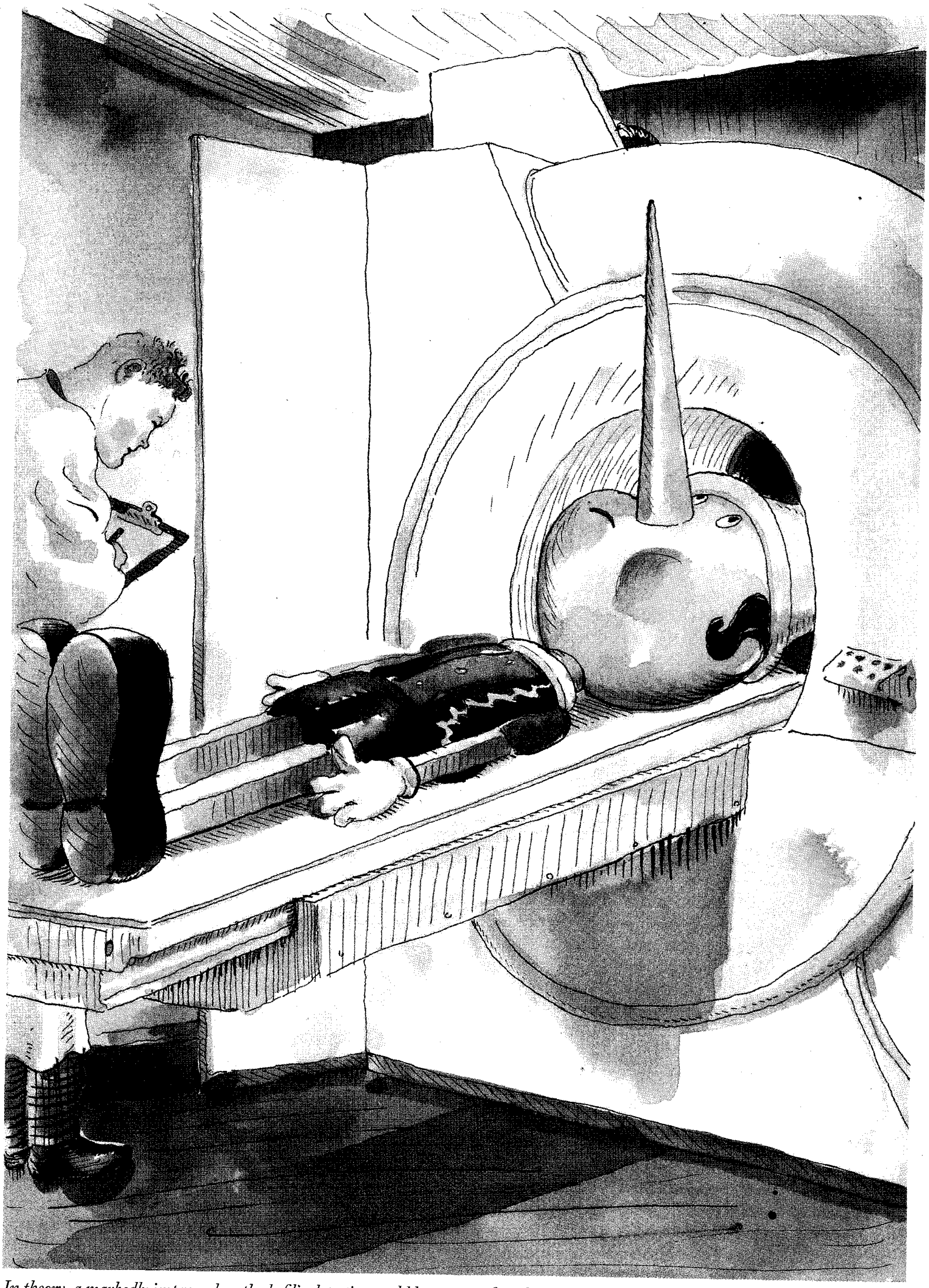
Aldert Vrij, a psychologist at the University of Portsmouth, in England, argues that there is no such thing as "typical" deceptive behavior—"nothing as obvious as Pinocchio's growing nose." When people tell complicated lies, they frequently pause longer and more often, and speak more slowly; but if the lie is simple, or highly polished, they tend to do the opposite. Clumsy deceivers are sometimes visibly agitated, but, over all, liars are less likely to blink, to move their hands and feet, or to make elaborate gestures—perhaps they deliberately inhibit their movements. As DePaulo says, "To be a good liar, you don't need to know what behaviors really separate liars from truthtellers, but what behaviors people *think* separate them."

A liar's testimony is often more persuasive than a truthteller's. Liars are more likely to tell a story in chronological order, whereas honest people often present accounts in an improvised jumble. Similarly, according to DePaulo and Bond, subjects who spontaneously corrected themselves, or said that there were details that they couldn't recall, were more likely to be truthful than those who did not—though, in the real world, memory lapses arouse suspicion.

People who are afraid of being disbelieved, even when they are telling the truth, may well look more nervous than people who are lying. This is bad news for the falsely accused, especially given that influential manuals of interrogation reinforce the myth of the twitchy liar. "Criminal Interrogation and Confessions" (1986), by Fred Inbau, John Reid, and Joseph Buckley, claims that shifts in posture and nervous "grooming gestures," such as "straightening hair" and "picking lint from clothing," often signal lying. David Zulawski and Douglas Wicklander's "Practical Aspects of Interview and Interrogation" (1992) asserts that a liar's movements tend to be "jerky and abrupt" and his hands "cold and clammy." Bunching Kleenex in a sweaty hand is another damning sign—one more reason for a sweaty-palmed, Kleenex-bunching person like me to hope that she's never interrogated.

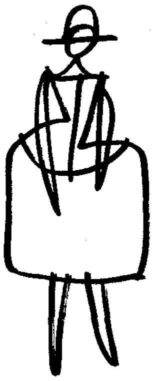
Maureen O'Sullivan, a deception researcher at the University of San Francisco, studies why humans are so bad at recognizing lies. Many people, she says, base assessments of truthfulness on irrelevant factors, such as personality or appearance. "Baby-faced, non-weird, and extroverted people are more likely to be judged truthful," she says. (Maybe this explains my trust in Steve Glass.) People are also blinkered by the "truthfulness bias": the vast majority of questions we ask of other people—the time, the price of the breakfast special—are answered honestly, and truth is therefore our default expectation. Then, there's the "learning-curve problem." We don't have a refined idea of what a successful lie looks and sounds like, since we almost never receive feedback on the fibs that we've been told; the co-worker who, at the corporate retreat, assured you that she loved your presentation

BARRY BLITT



In theory, a markedly improved method of lie detection could have as profound an impact as DNA evidence.

doesn't usually reveal later that she hated it. As O'Sullivan puts it, "By definition, the most convincing lies go undetected."



Maybe it's because we're such poor lie detectors that we have kept alive the dream of a foolproof lie-detecting machine. This February, at a conference on deception research, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Steven Hyman, a psychiatrist and the provost of Harvard, spoke of "the incredible hunger to have some test that separates truth from deception—in some sense, the science be damned."

This hunger has kept the polygraph, for example, in widespread use. The federal government still performs tens of thousands of polygraph tests a year—even though an exhaustive 2003 National Academy of Sciences report concluded that research on the polygraph's efficacy was inadequate, and that when it was used to investigate a specific incident after the fact it performed "well above chance, though well below perfection." Polygraph advocates cite accuracy estimates of ninety per cent—which sounds impressive until you think of the people whose lives might be ruined by a machine that fails one out of ten times. The polygraph was judged thoroughly unreliable as a screening tool; its accuracy in "distinguishing actual or potential security violators from innocent test takers" was deemed "insufficient to justify reliance on its use." And its success in criminal investigations can be credited, in no small part, to the intimidation factor. People who believe that they are in the presence of an infallible machine sometimes confess, and this is counted as an achievement of the polygraph. (According to law-enforcement lore, the police have used copy machines in much the same way: They tell a suspect to place his hand on a "truth machine"—a copier in which the paper has "LIE" printed on it. When the photocopy emerges, it shows the suspect's hand with "LIE" stamped on it.)

Over the past two decades, inventors have attempted to supplant the polygraph with new technologies: voice-stress analysis; thermal imaging of the face; and, most recently and spectacularly, brain imaging. Though these methods remain in an embryonic stage of development, they have already been greeted with considerable enthusiasm, especially in America. Private companies are eager to replace traditional modes of ascertaining the truth—such as the jury system—with a machine that can be patented and sold. And law-enforcement agencies yearn to overcome the problem of suspects who often remain maddeningly opaque, even in the face of sustained interrogation. Although one immediate result of the September 11th attacks was the revival of an older, and even more controversial, form of interrogation—torture—the war on terror has also inflamed the desire for a mind-reading machine.

Not long ago, I met with an entrepreneur named Joel Huizenga, who has started a company, based in San Diego, called No Lie MRI. Most methods of lie detection look at the activity of the sympathetic nervous system. The polygraph, for instance, is essentially an instrument for measuring stress. Heart and respiration rates, blood volume, and galvanic skin response—a proxy for palm sweat—are represented as tracings on graph paper or on a screen, which fluctuate with every heartbeat or breath. The method that Huizenga is marketing, which employs a form of body scanning known as functional magnetic resonance imaging, or fMRI, promises to look inside the brain. "Once you jump behind the skull, there's no hiding," Huizenga told me.

Functional MRI technology, invented in the early nineties, has been used primarily as a diagnostic tool for identifying neurological disorders and for mapping the brain. Unlike MRIs, which capture a static image, an fMRI makes a series of scans that show changes in the flow of oxygenated blood preceding neural events. The brain needs oxygen to perform mental tasks, so a rise in the level of oxygenated blood in one part of the brain can indicate cognitive activity there. (Blood has different magnetic properties when it is oxygenated, which is why it is helpful to have a machine that is essentially a big magnet.) Brain-scan lie detection is predicated on the idea that lying requires more cognitive effort, and therefore more oxygenated blood, than truthtelling.

Brain scanning promises to show us directly what the polygraph showed us obliquely. Huizenga expects his company to be a force for justice, exonerating customers who are, as he put it, "good people trying to push back the cruel world that is indicting them unfairly." Brain scans already have clout in the courtroom; during death-penalty hearings, judges often allow images suggesting neurological impairment to be introduced as mitigating evidence. In theory, an improved method of lie detection could have as profound an impact as DNA evidence, which has freed more than a hundred wrongly accused people since its introduction, in the late eighties. If Huizenga has perfected such a technology, he's onto something big.

At Huizenga's suggestion, we met at a restaurant called the Rusty Pelican, on the Pacific Coast Highway, in Newport Beach. A television screen on one wall showed a surfing contest; Huizenga, who is fifty-three, with dirty-blond hair in a boyish cut, is a surfer himself. He has a bachelor's degree from the University of Colorado, a master's degree in biology from Stony Brook, and an M.B.A. from the University of Rochester. No Lie is Huizenga's second startup. The first, ISCHEM Corporation, uses body scanning to look for plaque in people's arteries. Before that, he worked for Pantox, a company that offers blood tests to gauge a person's antioxidant levels.

After we sat down, Huizenga recounted the origins of No Lie. A few years ago, he came across an item in the *Times* about some tantalizing research conducted by Daniel Langleben, a psychiatrist and neuroscientist at the University of Pennsylvania. Subjects were placed inside an fMRI machine and told to make some true statements and some false ones. Brain scans taken while the subjects were lying frequently showed a significantly increased level of activity in three discrete areas of the cerebral cortex. Langleben suggested that "intentional deception" could be "anatomically localized" by fMRI scanning. Huizenga immediately saw a business opportunity. "I jumped on it," he told me. "If I wasn't here sitting in front of you, somebody else would be."

The Web site for No Lie claims that its technology, which is based on the Penn protocol, "represents the first and only direct measure of truth verification and lie detection in human history!" No Lie just started offering tests commercially, and has charged about a dozen clients approximately ten thousand dollars apiece for an examination. (No Lie sends customers to an independent imaging center in Tarzana, a suburb of Los Angeles, to insure that "quality testing occurs according to standardized test protocols.") Some of these initial clients are involved in civil and criminal cases; the first person to use the service, Harvey Nathan, was accused in 2003 of deliberately setting fire to a deli that he owns in South Carolina. A judge dismissed the charges, but Nathan wanted to bring suit against his insurance company, and he thought that documented evidence of his innocence would further his cause. So in December he flew to California and took No Lie's test. He passed. Nathan said, "If I hadn't, I would have jumped from the seventeenth floor of the hotel where I was staying. How could I have gone back to South Carolina and said, 'Oh that machine must not have worked right'? I believed in it then and I believe in it now." Nathan's exam was filmed for the Discovery Channel, which may soon launch a reality series centering on brain-scanning lie detection.

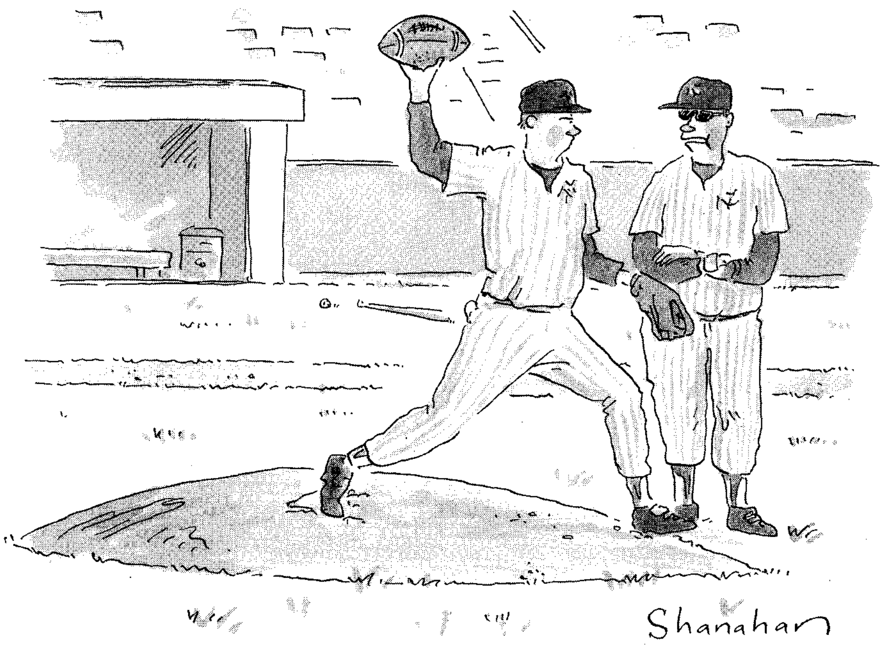
Several companies have expressed interest in No Lie's services, Huizenga told me. (He would not name them.) He said that he will be able to accommodate corporate clients once he has signed deals with other scanning facilities; he is in talks with imaging centers in a dozen cities, including New York and Chicago. No Lie also plans to open a branch in Switzerland later this year.

Huizenga has been criticized for his company's name, but he said, "It's not about being dignified—it's about being remembered." He believes that the market for fMRI-based lie detection will one day exceed that of the polygraph industry, which brings in hundreds of millions of dollars annually. Investment analysts say that it is too soon to judge if Huizenga's optimism is warranted, but No Lie has attracted some prominent backing. One of its prime investors is Alex Hart, the former C.E.O. of MasterCard International, who is also serving as a management consultant. And it has a "scientific board" consisting of four paid advisers, among them Terrence Sejnowski, the director of the Crick-Jacobs Center for theoretical and computational biology at the Salk Institute. In an e-mail, Sejnowski explained that he offers counsel on "advanced signal processing and machine-learning techniques that can help improve the analysis of the data and the accuracy of the performance." He said of No Lie, "The demand is there, and to succeed as a company the new technology only needs to be better than existing approaches."

Huizenga speaks of his company's goals in blunt terms. "What do people lie about?" he asked me. "Sex, power, and money—probably in that order." (The company's Web site recommends No Lie's services for "risk reduction in dating," "trust issues in interpersonal relationships," and "issues concerning the underlying topics of sex, power, and money.") "Parents say, 'Yes, this is *perfect* for adolescents,'" he went on. "People who are dating say, 'Yes, this is great for dating, because people never tell you the truth.'"

He said that his company receives dozens of inquiries a week: from divorcing men accused of child abuse; from women wanting to prove their fidelity to jealous spouses or boyfriends; from people representing governments in Africa and the former Soviet republics; from "the Chinese police department." He said that he understood why governments were interested in lie-detection technology. "Look at Joe Stalin," he said. "Joe wanted power, he wanted to be on top. Well, it's hard to murder massive numbers of opponents. People in our government, and in others', need more effective ways of weeding out those who aren't their puppets." Some potential foreign clients had explained to him, he said, that in societies that lacked "civilization, there is not trust, and lie detection could help build that trust." (He wasn't sure about that—he was "mulling it over.") Huizenga said that the United States government was "interested" in the kind of technology offered by No Lie; the company has hired Joel S. Lisker, a former F.B.I. agent, to be its "sales liaison for the federal government." (Lisker declined to be interviewed, saying that his government contacts were "confidential.")

The Pentagon has supported research into high-tech lie detection, including the use of fMRI. The major scientific papers in the field were funded, in part, by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, which develops new technologies for military use, and by the Department of Defense Polygraph Institute, which trains lie-detection experts at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. (The Polygraph Institute underwent a name change in January—it's now the Defense Academy for Credibility Assessment—apparently in deference to new technologies such as fMRI.) Last June, the A.C.L.U. filed several Freedom of Information Act requests in an attempt to learn more about the government's involvement with the technology. Chris Calabrese, an A.C.L.U. lawyer, said that the C.I.A. would neither "confirm nor deny" that it is investigating fMRI applications; the Pentagon produced PowerPoint presentations identifying brain scans as a promising new technology for lie detection. Calabrese went on, "We were motivated by the fact that



"There's your problem."

"I'm confused. Is this the start of something, the end of something, or the whole something?"

* * *

there are companies trying to sell this technology to the government. This Administration has a history of using questionable techniques of truth verification."

Many scholars also think that Huizenga's effort is premature. Steven Hyman, the Harvard professor, told me that No Lie was "foolish." But the history of lie-detection machines suggests that it would be equally foolish to assume that a few scholarly critics can forestall the adoption of such a seductive new technology. "People are drawn to it," Huizenga said, smiling. "It's a magnetic concept."

In comic books of the nineteen-forties, Wonder Woman, the sexy Amazon superhero, wields a golden "lasso of truth." Anybody she captures is rendered temporarily incapable of lying. Like the golden lasso, the polygraph, its inventors believed, compelled the body to reveal the mind's secrets. But the connection between the lasso and the lie detector is even more direct than that: Wonder Woman's creator, William Moulton Marston, was also a key figure in the development of the polygraph. Marston, like other pioneers of lie detection, believed that the conscious mind could be circumvented, and the truth uncovered, through the measurement of bodily signals.

This was not a new idea. In 1730, Daniel Defoe published "An Effectual Scheme for the Immediate Preventing of Street Robberies and Suppressing All Other Disorders of the Night," in which he proposed an alternative to physical coercion: "Guilt carries fear always about with it, there is a tremor in the blood of a thief, that, if attended to, would effectually discover him; and if charged as a suspicious fellow, on that suspicion only I would feel his pulse."

In the late nineteenth century, the Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso invented his own version of a lie detector, based on the physiology of emotion. A suspect was told to plunge his hand into a tank filled with water, and the subject's pulse would cause the level of liquid to rise and fall slightly; the greater the fluctuation, the more dishonest the subject was judged to be.

Lombroso's student Angelo Mosso, a physiologist, noticed that shifts in emotion were often detectable in fair-skinned people in the flushing or blanching of their faces. Based on this observation, he designed a bed that rested on a fulcrum. If a suspect reclining on it told a lie, Mosso hypothesized, resulting changes in blood flow would alter the distribution of weight on the bed, unbalancing it. The device, known as Mosso's cradle, apparently never made it past the prototype.

William Moulton Marston was born in 1893, in Boston. He attended Harvard, where he worked in the lab of Hugo Münsterberg, a German émigré psychologist, who had been tinkering with an apparatus that registered responses to emotions, such as horror and tenderness, through graphical tracing of pulse rates. One student volunteer was Gertrude Stein. (She later wrote of the experience in the third person: "Strange fancies begin to crowd upon her, she feels that the silent pen is writing on and on forever.")

In 1917, Marston published a paper arguing that systolic blood pressure could be monitored to detect deception. As Ken Alder, a history professor at Northwestern, notes in his recent book, "The Lie Detectors: The History of an American Obsession," Münsterberg and Marston's line of inquiry caught the imagination of police detectives, reporters, and law-enforcement reformers across the country, who saw a lie-detecting machine as an alternative not only to the brutal interrogation known as the third degree but also to the jury system. In 1911, an article in the *Times* predicted a future in which "there will be no jury, no horde of detectives and witnesses, no charges and countercharges, and no attorney for the defense. These impediments of our courts will be unnecessary. The State will merely submit all suspects in a case to the tests of scientific instruments."

John Larson, a police officer in Berkeley, California, who also had a doctorate in physiology, expanded on Marston's work. He built an unwieldy device, the "cardio-pneumo-psychograph," which used a standard cuff to measure blood pressure, and a rubber hose wrapped around the subject's chest to measure his breathing. Subjects were told to answer yes-or-no questions; their physiological responses were recorded by styluses that scratched black recording paper on revolving drums.

In 1921, as Alder writes, Larson had his first big chance to test his device. He was seeking to identify a thief at a residence hall for female students at Berkeley. Larson gave several suspects a six-minute exam, in which he asked various questions: "How much is thirty times forty?" "Will you graduate this year?" "Do you dance?" "Did you steal the money?" The result foretold the way in which a polygraph would often "work": as a goad to confession. A student nurse confessed to the crime—a few days after she'd stormed out during the exam.

In the early twenties, another member of the Berkeley police force, Leonarde Keeler, increased the number of physical signs that the lie detector monitored. His portable machine recorded pulse rate, blood pressure, respiration, and "electrodermal response"—again, palm sweat. Today's lie detector looks much like Keeler's eighty-year-old invention. And it bears the same name: the polygraph.

Polygraphs never caught on in Europe. But here their advent coincided with the Prohibition-era crime wave; with a new fascination with the unconscious (this was also the era of experimentation with so-called truth serums); and with the wave of technological innovation that had brought Americans electricity, radios, telephones, and cars. The lie detector quickly insinuated itself into American law enforcement: at the end of the thirties, a survey of thirteen city police departments showed that they had given polygraphs to nearly nine thousand suspects.

In 1923, Marston tried without success to get a polygraph test introduced as evidence in the Washington, D.C., murder trial of James Alphonso Frye. In its ruling, the Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit declared that a new scientific method had to have won "general acceptance" from experts before judges could give it credence. Since this decision, the polygraph has been kept out of most courtrooms, but there is an important exception: about half the states allow a defendant to take the test, generally on the understanding that the charges will be dropped if he passes and the results may be entered as evidence if he fails.

The polygraph became widely used in government and in business, often with dubious results. In the fifties, the State Department deployed the lie detector to help purge suspected homosexuals. As late as the seventies, a quarter of American corporations used the polygraph on their employees. Although Congress banned most such tests when it passed the Polygraph Protection Act, in 1988, the federal government still uses the polygraph for security screenings—despite high-profile mistakes. The polygraph failed to cast suspicion on Aldrich Ames, the C.I.A. agent who spied for the Soviets, and wrongly implicated Wen Ho Lee, the Department of Energy scientist, as an agent of the Chinese government.

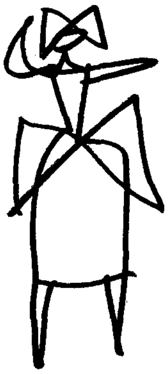
One excellent way to gauge the polygraph's effectiveness would be to compare it with an equally intimidating fake machine, just as a drug is compared with a placebo. But, strangely, no such experiment has ever been performed. In 1917, the year that Marston published his first paper on lie detection, his research encountered strong skepticism. John F. Shepard, a psychologist at the University of Michigan, wrote a review of Marston's research. Though the physical changes that the machine measured were "an index of activity," Shepard wrote, the same results "would be caused by so many different circumstances, anything demanding equal activity (intelligence or emotional)." The same criticism holds true today. All the physiological responses measured by the polygraph have causes other than lying, vary greatly among individuals, and can be affected by conscious effort. Breathing is particularly easy to regulate. Advice on how to beat the lie detector is a cottage industry. "Deception Detection: Winning the Polygraph Game" (1991) warns potential subjects, "Don't complain about a dry mouth. An examiner will interpret this as fear of being found out and will press you even harder." (Many people do get dry-mouthed when they're nervous—which is apparently why, during the Inquisition, a suspect was sometimes made to swallow a piece of bread and cheese: if it stuck in his throat, he was deemed guilty.) Other well-known "countermeasures" include taking a mild sedative; using mental imagery to calm yourself; and biting your tongue to make yourself seem anxious in response to random questions.

Why, then, is the polygraph still used? Perhaps the most vexing thing about the device is that, for all its flaws, it's not pure hokum: a racing pulse and an increased heart rate can indicate guilt. Every liar has felt an involuntary flutter, at least once. Yet there are enough exceptions to insure that the polygraph will identify some innocent people as guilty and some guilty people as innocent.

At the Cambridge conference, Jed S. Rakoff, a United States district judge in New York, told a story about a polygraph and a false confession. Days after September 11th, an Egyptian graduate student named Abdallah Higazy came to the attention of the F.B.I. Higazy had been staying at the Millennium Hotel near Ground Zero on the day of the attacks. A hotel security guard claimed that he had found a pilot's radio in Higazy's room. Higazy said that it wasn't his, and when he appeared before Rakoff he asked to be given a polygraph. As Rakoff recalled, "Higazy very much believed in them and thought it would exonerate him." During a four-hour interrogation by an F.B.I. polygrapher, Higazy first repeated that he knew nothing about the radio, and then said that maybe it was his. He was charged with lying to the F.B.I. and went to prison. Within a month, a pilot stopped by the hotel to ask about a radio that he had accidentally left there. The security guard who found the radio admitted that it hadn't been in Higazy's room; he was prosecuted and pled guilty. Higazy was exonerated, and a subsequent investigation revealed that he had felt dizzy and ill during the examination, probably out of nervousness. But when Higazy asked the polygrapher if anyone had ever become ill during a polygraph test he was told that "it had not happened to anyone who told the truth."

To date, there have been only a dozen or so peer-reviewed studies that attempt to catch lies with fMRI technology, and most of them involved fewer than twenty people. Nevertheless, the idea has inspired a torrent of media attention, because scientific studies involving brain scans dazzle people, and because mind reading by machine is a beloved science-fiction trope, revived most recently in movies like "Minority Report" and "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind." Many journalistic accounts of the new technology—accompanied by colorful bitmapped images of the brain in action—resemble science fiction themselves. In January, the *Financial Times* proclaimed, "For the first time in history, it is becoming possible to read someone else's mind with the power of science." A CNBC report, accompanied by the Eurythmics song "Would I Lie to You?," showed its reporter entering an fMRI machine, described as a "surefire way to identify a liar." In March, a cover story in the *Times Magazine* predicted transformations of the legal system in response to brain imaging; its author, Jeffrey Rosen, suggested that there was a widespread "fear" among legal scholars that "the use of brain-scanning technology as a kind of super mind-reading device will threaten our privacy and mental freedom." *Philadelphia* has declared "the end of the lie," and a *Wired* article, titled "Don't Even Think About Lying," proclaimed that fMRI is "poised to transform the security industry, the judicial system, and our fundamental notions of privacy." Such talk has made brain-scan lie detection sound as solid as DNA evidence—which it most definitely is not.

Paul Bloom, a cognitive psychologist at Yale, believes that brain imaging has a beguiling appeal beyond its actual power to explain mental and emotional states. "Psychologists can be heard grousing that the only way to publish in *Science* or *Nature* is with pretty color pictures of the brain," he wrote in an essay for the magazine *Seed*. "Critical funding decisions, precious column inches, tenure posts, science credibility, and the popular imagination have all been influenced by fMRI's seductive but deceptive grasp on our attentions." Indeed, in the past decade, *Nature* alone has published nearly a hundred articles involving fMRI scans. The technology is a remarkable tool for exploring the brain, and may one day help scientists understand much more about cognition and emotion. But enthusiasm for brain scans leads people to overestimate the accuracy with which they can pinpoint the sources of complex things like love or altruism, let alone explain them.



Brain scans enthrall us, in part, because they seem more like "real" science than those elaborate deductive experiments that so many psychologists perform. In the same way that an X-ray confirms a bone fissure, a brain scan seems to offer an objective measure of mental activity. And, as Bloom writes, fMRI research "has all the trappings of work with great lab-cred: big, expensive, and potentially dangerous machines, hospitals and medical centers, and a lot of people in white coats."

Deena Skolnick Weisberg, a graduate student at Yale, has conducted a clever study, to be published in the *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, which points to the outsized glamour of brain-scan research. She and her colleagues provided three groups—neuroscientists, neuroscience students, and ordinary adults—with explanations for common psychological phenomena (such as the tendency to assume that other people know the same things we do). Some of these explanations were crafted to be bad. Weisberg found that all three groups were adept at identifying the bad explanations, except when she inserted the words "Brain scans indicate." Then the students and the regular adults became notably less discerning. Weisberg and her colleagues conclude, "People seem all too ready to accept explanations that allude to neuroscience."

Some bioethicists have been particularly credulous, assuming that MRI mind reading is virtually a done deal, and arguing that there is a need for a whole new field: "neuroethics." Judy Illes and Eric Racine, bioethicists at Stanford, write that fMRI, by laying bare the brain's secrets, may "fundamentally alter the dynamics between personal identity, responsibility, and free will." A recent article in *The American Journal of Bioethics* asserts that brain-scan lie detection may "force a reëxamination of the very idea of privacy, which up until now could not reliably penetrate the individual's cranium."

Legal scholars, for their part, have started debating the constitutionality of using brain-imaging evidence in court. At a recent meeting of a National Academy of Sciences committee on lie detection, in Washington, D.C., Hank Greely, a Stanford law professor, said, "When we make speculative leaps like these . . . it increases, sometimes in detrimental ways, the belief that the technology works." In the rush of companies like No Lie to market brain scanning, and in the rush of scholars to judge the propriety of using the technology, relatively few people have asked whether fMRIs can actually do what they either hope or fear they can do.

Functional MRI is not the first digital-age breakthrough that was supposed to supersede the polygraph. First, there was "brain fingerprinting," which is based on the idea that the brain releases a recognizable electric signal when processing a memory. The technique used EEG sensors to try to determine whether a suspect retained memories related to a crime—an image of, say, a murder weapon. In 2001, *Time* named Lawrence Farwell, the developer of brain fingerprinting, one of a hundred innovators who "may be the Picassos or the Einsteins of the 21st century." But researchers have since noted a big drawback: it's impossible to distinguish between brain signals produced by actual memories and those produced by imagined memories—as in a made-up alibi.

After September 11th, another technology was widely touted: thermal imaging, an approach based on the finding that the area around the eyes can heat up when people lie. The developers of this method—Ioannis Pavlidis, James Levine, and Norman Eberhardt—published journal articles that had titles like "Seeing Through the Face of Deception" and were accompanied by dramatic thermal images. But the increased blood flow that raises the temperature around the eyes is just another mark of stress. Any law-enforcement agency that used the technique to spot potential terrorists would also pick up a lot of jangly, harmless travellers.

Daniel Langleben, the Penn psychiatrist whose research underpins No Lie, began exploring this potential new use for MRIs in the late nineties. Langleben, who is forty-five, has spent most of his career studying the brains of heroin addicts and hyperactive boys. He developed a side interest in lying partly because his research agenda made him think about impulse control, and partly because his patients often lied to him. Five years ago, Langleben and a group of Penn colleagues published the study on brain scanning and lie detection that attracted Huizenga's attention. In the experiment, which was written up in *Neuroimage*, each of twenty-three subjects was offered an envelope containing a twenty-dollar bill and a playing card—the five of clubs. They were told that they could keep the money if they could conceal the card's identity when they were asked about it inside an MRI machine. The subjects pushed a button to indicate yes or no as images of playing cards flashed on a screen in front of them. After Langleben assembled the data, he concluded that lying seemed to involve more cognitive effort than truthtelling, and that three areas of the brain generally became more active during acts of deception: the anterior cingulate cortex, which is associated with heightened attention and error monitoring; the dorsal lateral prefontal cortex, which is involved in behavioral control; and the parietal cortex, which helps process sensory input. Three years later, Langleben and his colleagues published another study, again involving concealed playing cards, which suggested that lying could be differentiated from truthtelling in individuals as well as in groups. The fMRI's accuracy rate for distinguishing truth from lies was seventy-seven per cent.

Andrew Kozel and Mark George, then at the Medical University of South Carolina, were doing similar work at the time; in 2005, they published a study of fMRI lie detection in which thirty people were instructed to enter a room and take either a watch or a ring that had been placed there. Then, inside a scanner, they were asked to lie about which object they had taken but to answer truthfully to neutral questions, such as “Do you like chocolate?” The researchers distinguished truthful from deceptive responses in ninety per cent of the cases. (Curiously, Kozel's team found that liars had heightened activity in different areas of the brain than Langleben did.)

Langleben and Kozel weren't capturing a single, crisp image of the brain processing a lie; an fMRI's record of a split-second event is considered unreliable. Instead, they asked a subject to repeat his answer dozens of times while the researchers took brain scans every couple of seconds. A computer then counted the number of “voxels” (the 3-D version of pixels) in the brain image that reflected a relatively high level of oxygenated blood, and used algorithms to determine whether this elevated activity mapped onto specific regions of the brain.

One problem of fMRI lie detection is that the machines, which cost about three million dollars each, are notoriously finicky. Technicians say that the scanners often have “bad days,” in which they can produce garbage data. And a subject who squirms too much in the scanner can invalidate the results. (Even moving your tongue in your mouth can cause a problem.) The results for four of the twenty-three subjects in Langleben's first study had to be thrown out because the subjects had fidgeted.

The Langleben studies also had a major flaw in their design: the concealed playing card came up only occasionally on the screen, so the increased brain activity that the scans showed could have been a result not of deception but of heightened attention to the salient card. Imagine that you're the research subject: You're lying on your back, trying to hold still, probably bored, maybe half asleep, looking at hundreds of cards that don't concern you. Then, at last, up pops the five of clubs—and your brain sparks with recognition.

Nearly all the volunteers for Langleben's studies were Penn students or members of the academic community. There were no sociopaths or psychopaths; no one on antidepressants or other psychiatric medication; no one addicted to alcohol or drugs; no one with a criminal record; no one mentally retarded. These allegedly seminal studies look exclusively at unproblematic, intelligent people who were instructed to lie about trivial matters in which they had little stake. An incentive of twenty dollars can hardly be compared with, say, your freedom, reputation, children, or marriage—any or all of which might be at risk in an actual lie-detection scenario.

The word “lie” is so broad that it's hard to imagine that any test, even one that probes the brain, could detect all forms of deceit: small, polite lies; big, brazen, self-aggrandizing lies; lies to protect or enchant our children; lies that we don't really acknowledge to ourselves as lies; complicated alibis that we spend days rehearsing. Certainly, it's hard to imagine that all these lies will bear the identical neural signature. In their degrees of sophistication and detail, their moral weight, their emotional valence, lies are as varied as the people who tell them. As Montaigne wrote, “The reverse side of the truth has a hundred thousand shapes and no defined limits.”

Langleben acknowledges that his research is not quite the breakthrough that the media hype has suggested. “There are many questions that need to be looked into before we know whether this will work as lie detection,” he told me. “Can you do this with somebody who has an I.Q. of ninety-five? Can you do it with somebody who's fifty or older? Somebody who's brain-injured? What kinds of real crimes could you ask about? What about countermeasures? What about people with delusions?”

Nevertheless, the University of Pennsylvania licensed the pending patents on his research to No Lie in 2003, in exchange for an equity position in the company. Langleben didn't protest. As he explained to me, “It's good for your résumé. We're encouraged to have, as part of our portfolio, industry collaborations.” He went on, “I was trying to be a good boy. I had an idea. I went to the Center of Technology Transfer and asked them, ‘Do you like this?’ They said, ‘*Yeah*, we like that.’ ”

Steven Laken is the C.E.O. of Cephos, a Boston-based company that is developing a lie-detection product based on Kozel's watch-and-ring study. (It has an exclusive licensing agreement for pending patents that the Medical University of South Carolina applied for in 2002.) Ce-

ZIEGLER
ADVANCED COURSE AT THE WINE APPRECIATION INSTITUTE IN MY HOUSE

"Are we there yet?"

• •

phos is proceeding more cautiously than No Lie. Laken's company is still conducting studies with Kozel, the latest of which involve more than a hundred people. (The sample pool is again young, healthy, and free of criminal records and psychological problems.) Cephos won't be offering fMRIs commercially until the results of those studies are in; Laken predicts that this will happen within a year. At the National Academy of Sciences committee meeting, he said, "I can say we're not at ninety-per-cent accuracy. And I have said, if we were not going to get to ninety per cent, we're not going to sell this product." (Nobody involved in fMRI lie detection seems troubled by a ten-per-cent error rate.)

In March, I went to a suburb of Boston to meet Laken. He is thirty-five years old and has a Ph.D. in cellular and molecular medicine from Johns Hopkins. Nine years ago, he identified a genetic mutation that can lead to colorectal cancer. He has a more conservative temperament than Joel Huizenga does, and he told me he thinks that spousal-fidelity cases are "sleazy." But he sees a huge potential market for what he calls a "truth verifier"—a service for people looking to exonerate themselves. "There are some thirty-five million criminal and civil cases filed in the U.S. every year," Laken said. "About twenty million are criminal cases. So let's just say that you never even do a criminal case—well, that still leaves roughly fifteen million for us to go after. Some you exclude, but you end up with several million cases that are high stakes: two people arguing about things that are important." Laken also thinks that fMRI lie detection could help the government elicit information, and confessions, from terrorist suspects, without physical coercion.

He calmly dismissed the suggestion that the application of fMRI lie detection is premature. "I've heard it said, 'This technology can't work because it hasn't been tested on psychopaths, and it hasn't been tested on children, and it certainly hasn't been tested on psychopathic children,'" he said. "If that were the standard, there'd never be any medicine."

Laken and I spoke while driving to Framingham, Massachusetts, to visit an MRI testing center run by Shields, a company that operates twenty-two such facilities in the state. Laken was working on a deal with Shields to use their scanners. For Shields, it would be a smart move, Laken said, because customers would pay up front for the scan—there would be no insurance companies to contend with. (Cephos and Shields have since made an official arrangement.) Laken believes that Cephos will prosper primarily through referrals: lawyers will function as middlemen, ordering an fMRI for a client, much as a doctor orders an MRI for a patient.

We pulled into the parking lot, where a sign identifies Shields as "the MRI provider for the 3-X World Champion New England Patriots." Inside, John Cannillo, an imaging specialist at Shields, led us into a room to observe a woman undergoing an MRI exam. She lay on a platform that slid into a white tubular scanner, which hummed like a giant tuning fork.

During a brain scan, the patient wears a copper head coil, in order to enhance the magnetic field around the skull. The magnet is so powerful that you have to remove any metal objects, or you will feel a tugging sensation. If a person has metal in his body—for instance, shrapnel, or the gold grillwork that some hip-hop fans have bonded to their teeth—it can pose a danger or invalidate the results. At the N.A.S. meeting in Washington, one scientist wryly commented, "It could become a whole new industry—criminals having implants put in to avoid scanning."

A Shields technician instructed the woman in the scanner from the other side of a glass divide. "Take a breath in, and hold it, hold it," he said. Such exercises help minimize a patient's movements.

As we watched, Laken admitted that "the kinks" haven't been worked out of fMRI lie detection. "We make mistakes," he said of his company. "We don't know why we make mistakes. We may *never* know why. We hope we can get better." Some bioethicists and journalists may worry about the far-off threat to "cognitive freedom," but the real threat is simpler and more immediate: the commercial introduction of high-tech "truth verifiers" that may work no better than polygraphs but seem more impressive and scientific. Polygraphs, after all, are not administered by licensed medical professionals.

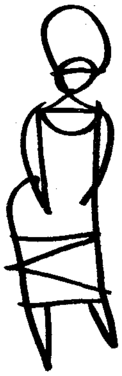
Nancy Kanwisher, a cognitive scientist at M.I.T., relies a great deal on MRI technology. In 1997, she identified an area near the bottom of the brain that is specifically involved in perceiving faces. She has become a pointed critic of the rush to commercialize brain imaging for lie detection, and believes that it's an exaggeration even to say that research into the subject is "preliminary." The tests that have been done, she argues, don't really look at lying. "Making a false response when instructed to do so is not a *lie*," she says. The ninety-per-cent "accuracy" ascribed to fMRI lie detection refers to a scenario so artificial that it is nearly meaningless. To know whether the technology works, she believes, "you'd have to test it on people whose guilt or innocence hasn't yet been determined, who believe the scan will reveal their guilt or innocence, and whose guilt or innocence can be established by other means afterward." In other words, you'd have to run a legal version of a clinical trial, using real suspects instead of volunteers.

Langleben believes that Kanwisher is too pessimistic. He suggested that researchers could recruit people who had been convicted of a crime in the past and get them to lie retrospectively about it. Or maybe test subjects could steal a "bagel or something" from a convenience store (the researchers could work out an agreement with the store in advance) and then lie about it. But even these studies don't approximate the real-world scenarios Kanwisher is talking about.

She points out that the various brain regions that appear to be significantly active during lying are "famous for being activated in a wide range of different conditions—for almost any cognitive task that is more difficult than an easier task." She therefore believes that fMRI lie detection would be vulnerable to countermeasures—performing arithmetic in your head, reciting poetry—that involve concerted cognitive effort. Moreover, the regions that allegedly make up the brain's "lying module" aren't that small. Even Laken admitted as much. As he put it, "Saying 'You have activation in the anterior cingulate' is like saying 'You have activation in Massachusetts.' "

Kanwisher's complaint suggests that fMRI technology, when used cavalierly, harks back to two pseudosciences of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: physiognomy and phrenology. Physiognomy held that a person's character was manifest in his facial features; phrenology held that truth lay in the bumps on one's skull. In 1807, Hegel published a critique of physiognomy and phrenology in "The Phenomenology of Spirit." In that work, as the philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre writes, Hegel observes that "the rules that we use in everyday life in interpreting facial expression are highly fallible." (A friend who frowns throughout your piano recital might explain that he was actually fuming over an argument with his wife.) Much of what Hegel had to say about physiognomy applies to modern attempts at mind reading. Hegel quotes the scientist Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, who, in characterizing physiognomy, remarked, "If anyone said, 'You act, certainly, like an honest man, but I can see from your face you are forcing yourself to do so, and are a rogue at heart,' without a doubt every brave fellow to the end of time when accosted in that fashion will retort with a box on the ear." This response is correct, Hegel argues, because it "refutes the fundamental assumption of such a 'science' of conjecture—that the reality of a man is his face, etc. The true being of man is, on the contrary, his act; individuality is real in the deed." In a similar vein, one might question the core presumption of fMRI—that the reality of man is his brain.

Elizabeth Phelps, a prominent cognitive neuroscientist at N.Y.U., who studies emotion and the brain, questions another basic assumption behind all lie-detection schemes—that telling a falsehood creates conflict within the liar. With the polygraph, the assumption is that the conflict is emotional: the liar feels guilty or anxious, and these feelings produce a measurable physiological response. With brain imaging, the assumption is that the conflict is cognitive: the liar has to work a little harder to make up a story, or even to stop himself from telling the truth. Neither is necessarily right. "Sociopaths don't feel the same conflict when they lie," Phelps says. "The regions of the brain that might be involved if you have to inhibit a response may not be the same when you're a sociopath, or autistic, or maybe just strange. Whether it's an emotional or a cognitive conflict you're supposed to be exhibiting, there's no reason to assume that your response wouldn't vary depending on what your personal tendencies are—on who *you* are."



When I talked to Huizenga, the No Lie C.E.O., a few months after I had met him in California, he was unperturbed about the skepticism that he was encountering from psychologists. "In science, when you go out a little further than other people, it can be hard," he said. "The top people understand, but the middle layer don't know what you're talking about."

Huizenga told me that he was trying to get fMRI evidence admitted into a California court for a capital case that he was working on. (He would not go into the case's details.) Given courts' skepticism toward the polygraph, Huizenga's success is far from certain. Then again we are in a technology-besotted age that rivals the twenties, when Marston popularized lie detection. And we live in a time when there is an understandable hunger for effective ways to expose evildoers, and when concerns about privacy have been nudged aside by our desire for security and certainty. "Brain scans indicate": what a powerful phrase. One can easily imagine judges being impressed by these pixellated images, which appear so often in scientific journals and in the newspaper. Indeed, if fMRI lie detection is successfully marketed as a service that lawyers steer their clients to, then a refusal even to take such a test could one day be cause for suspicion.

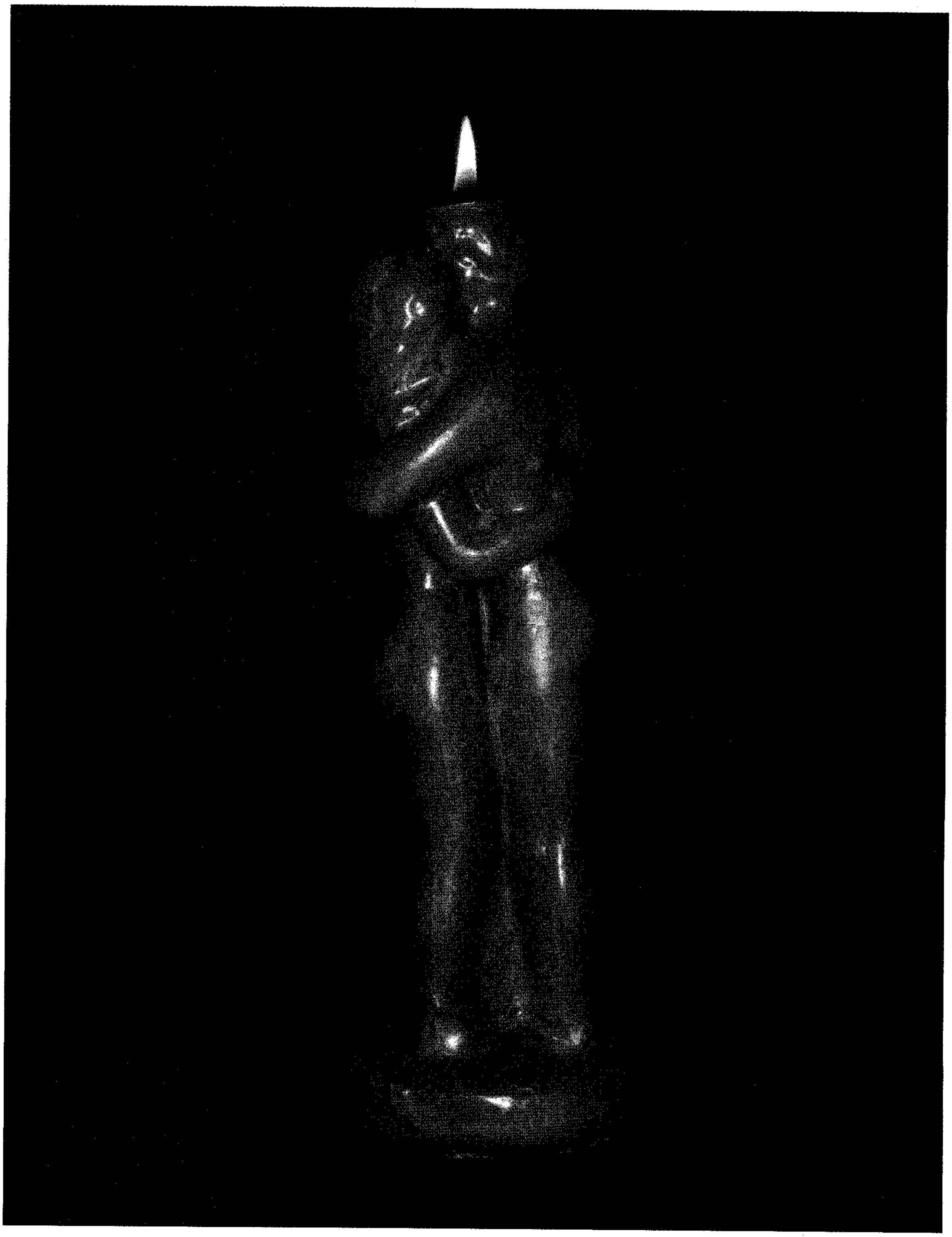
Steven Hyman, the Harvard psychiatrist, is surprised that companies like No Lie have eluded government oversight. "Think of a medical test," he said. "Before it would be approved for wide use, it would have to be shown to have acceptable accuracy among the populations in whom it would be deployed. The published data on the use of fMRI for lie detection uses highly artificial tests, which are not even convincing models of lying, in very structured laboratory settings. There are no convincing data that they could be used accurately to screen a person in the real world." But, in the end, that might not matter. "Pseudo-colored pictures of a person's brain lighting up are undoubtedly more persuasive than a pattern of squiggles produced by a polygraph," he said. "That could be a big problem if the goal is to get to the truth."

Laken, meanwhile, thinks that people who find themselves in a jam, and who are desperate to exonerate themselves, simply have to educate themselves as consumers. "People have said that fMRI tests are unethical and immoral," he said. "And the question is, Why is it unethical and immoral if somebody wants to spend their money on a test, as long as they understand what it is they're getting into? We've never said the test was *perfect*. We've never said we can guarantee that this is admissible in court and that's it—you're scot-free." Later that day, I looked again at the Cephos Web site. It contained a bolder proclamation. "The objective measure of truth and deception that Cephos offers," it said, "will help protect the innocent and convict the guilty." ♦

FICTION

THE MAHOGANY ELEPHANT

BY MAXIM BILLER



He waited for her for three months. He sorted out his photos, rearranged his books, moved the furniture around, and then he went on waiting. After that, he read all the letters he had ever received and threw most of them away, and then he bought a large map of India and hung it above his bed. Or, rather, he didn't buy a map of India, but that was what he really wanted to do while he was waiting. He waited and waited, and began to write a story about waiting for her, but he didn't know how it would end, so he stopped. Finally, he did nothing at all; he didn't even wait anymore. He was sleeping less and less, eating nothing but bread and tomatoes and yellow supermarket cheese, and then, at last, she came back. They sat together on his sofa, and she said, "It's been a long time."

"Yes," he said, although he had firmly made up his mind to say as little as possible. "It's been a very long time."

She had lost weight on her travels, and he didn't think she looked better than before. She was tired, but then she was always tired; she'd gone away to recover from feeling tired all the time, and now that she was back she was still tired. And she'd grown older. Older or harder or more serious—he wasn't sure which. There was a gray tinge to her tanned skin, the kind you usually see only on older women. Her smile was much too grave and thoughtful, and her cheekbones were even more prominent than before.

She rose to her feet and left the room. When she came back, she had a bright-colored bag in her hand.

"This is for you," she said.

"Thank you, my love," he said. He opened the bag. There was a small, fat black mahogany elephant in it. He put the elephant in his pocket.

"Would you like a drink?" he asked.

"Some water."

"I bought wine for you."

"No, water," she said.

He stood up slowly and grazed her leg with his. Apart from the fleeting kiss when she arrived, it was their first physical contact in three months.

"Really just water?" he called from the kitchen, but she didn't reply. "Chilled or room temperature?" he asked, and she called quietly back, "Room temperature."

He took a case of water out of the closet, then pushed it back in with his foot and opened the bottle of wine that had been standing on the kitchen table for the past six weeks. He picked up two glasses and the bottle, and before going back to the living room he took the elephant out of his pocket and threw it in the garbage.

"Jordi," she said, "I didn't want wine."

"No," he agreed. "It's still too early for wine."

"I didn't drink at all while I was there," she said.

"That's a pity," he said.

"No, I don't think so."

"I think it is."

He poured wine for himself, then for her, and they clinked glasses. She didn't look into his eyes, and she drank only a tiny sip before going into the kitchen to fetch a bottle of water. She sat down on the sofa again, as far from him as she had been before, and began telling him about her travels—but he was barely listening. While she'd been away, he had kept trying to imagine where she was at any given time, and what it was like there, but now he couldn't care less about India; he just wanted to know what her decision was. Of course, he knew already, but he wanted to hear it from her own mouth. He wanted her to suffer a little; he wanted her to have to say it and feel unhappy about hurting him. "No," she would say. "We're not going to get married, Jordi. I know that's not what I want now, so we'll never see each other again, the way we agreed."

"Did you miss me?" he said.

"No, Jordi," she said. "I didn't."

"Of course not," he said, and nodded.

"Are you angry?"

"No."

"I'm glad."

"Good."

"Are you sure you're not angry?"

"I'm sure."

He looked out the window. When she left, he had still been able to see across the square to the Church of Zion. Now the trees were in leaf and all he saw from the window was those wonderful large green leaves. The leaves swayed back and forth in the wind, reminding Jordi of seaweed drifting in the ocean.

Perhaps it was because they hadn't seen each other for so long. They hadn't seen each other for almost as long as they'd known each other! He laid his arm on the back of the sofa behind her and left it there for a few minutes, but then he took it away again. The arm didn't feel quite sure of itself.

"What about you?" she asked.

"Me?"

"What have you been doing?"

"Why didn't you call?" he said. "Not once in three months!"

"But you knew," she said, taking alarm. "That was our agreement, wasn't it?"

She was right. She'd even said, "Suppose I stay there for good?" And he had said that would be O.K., she was a free agent, and if they never said another word to each other again that would be O.K., too. But he had said so only out of calculation, because he knew that she was an Aries—and just try keeping a ram captive.

"There's a story about that elephant," she said. She paused, waiting for him to ask what the story was, but all he could think about was how to get the elephant out of the garbage without her noticing.

"It was the fourth," she said. "Honestly, it was the fourth, I swear it."

He didn't say anything. Then he went into the kitchen, and before bending over the trash he turned around, to be on the safe side.

"I lost the first three!" she called from the living room. "Can you imagine it—all three of them? Do you think that means something?"

He was frantically searching through the garbage, but he couldn't find the elephant. He dug his bare hands deeper and deeper into the damp, smelly trash, and then he took everything out and laid it on the floor.

"I know this one's ugly!" she called again. "I bought it at the airport in Bombay. You should have seen the others. They were really pretty!"

He couldn't find it. He knelt, sweating, with the trash of the past three days spread out on the floor around him, and suddenly he realized how crazy he was. He thought, If she sees this, she'll think I'm totally crazy, and he began picking up the trash and stuffing it back in the garbage can.

"Actually, that's not true. I didn't want to bring anything back for you." There

CAMILLE VIVIER, "RED LOVERS" (2000)/BIRD PRODUCTION

she was behind him. "I simply forgot about you."

He turned his head and looked up at her from below. She ran her hand through his hair and said, "And then I remembered you again in Bombay, at the airport. . . . What's the matter? Have you thrown it away already?"

"Yes," he said.

"Then we're quits," she said. She knelt down beside him and helped to pick up the trash. It was soon done, and then they washed their hands together in the bathroom, looked at each other in the mirror, and smiled.

"Would you go out, please?" she said.

She had never felt shy about sitting on the toilet in front of him before. Although he didn't really like it, he would have given anything for her not to send him out now. He closed the door behind him and went into the living room. He sat down on the sofa, but got up again the next minute and put some music on. It was a CD they'd listened to together a couple of times, so he quickly turned it off. He sat down on the sofa again and looked out the window, watching the large green leaves swaying in the wind, and then he didn't feel so bad after all. It was as if he himself had just come back from a journey, a very good one, but difficult, too; indeed, often simply tedious. And, now that he was back, he was glad not to be travelling, glad that he could just sit here where he had sat for years, looking out the window at the large green leaves and enjoying them, waiting for them to fall so that he could see the church behind them and be glad to think that they would soon be growing again.

VENICE

Mrs. Hunter is the only name I have for her,
A rich old woman who engaged my father, a painter,
To document her collection of keys.
Photographs she considered vulgar.

She lived in a mansard carriage house, painted black.
While my father made paintings of the keys
I made drawings of the house—
The Chinese parasol in a backlit case,
A sheikh's robe draped across the dining-room table, under glass.

I added things that should have been there, a harpsichord.
I deleted what seemed mysteriously out of place.
Once, after I fell against my father's palette,
He had to scrub the paint from my hair.

Not to make things was idleness.
The house contained things to be made.
Not raw material: material that bore
Heavily the impression of having been used, worn,
Made previously into other things—

Like the house itself, once a place for horses,
Now the visible confirmation of what I knew by instinct
But had never seen: that only strange things could be beautiful.
McNamara, Westmoreland—outside the war was on.
Her house was where I lived in my mind.

For a time, I thought I'd be a painter, too.
Then I thought perhaps a musician.
When I first saw San Simeone Piccolo
Floating across the Grand Canal,
I stepped into my mind.
I bought Mrs. Hunter a key.

—*James Longenbach*

Before she went away, they'd tried it on the sofa once. No, he had tried it; she went along with him at first, but then she suddenly crossed her arms over her bare breasts. He ran his hand over her belly, and she pressed her legs firmly together. He turned away, disappointed, and she said it was horrible of him to punish her like that. After her flight had taken off, he sent her a text message apologizing, and perhaps she had seen it when the plane stopped over in Zurich, or perhaps not.

How much longer would she stay on the toilet? She usually took very little time about it—he was always surprised by how little time she needed—but she went very often. He sometimes had to go frequently, too, but only when he was nervous, which maybe meant that she was always nervous. Today was different; this was the first time she'd gone to the bathroom since arriving, and she had been here for two hours. So today she wasn't as nervous as usual! As soon as that thought occurred to him, he felt nervous and wanted to go to the bathroom himself.

He sat there for a while, waiting. Ten minutes must have passed, and then he couldn't wait any longer and went over to the bathroom. The door was closed, so he knocked, but there was no answer. He knocked again, louder, and now he heard her.

"I'm here," she said quietly.

"Where?"

"Here," she said even more quietly.

She was in the bedroom. She was lying in his bed fully clothed, and when he came in she said, "All right, let's get married." She lay there in his bed fully clothed, and then she turned on her side, laid her head on the pillow and put her hands under it, and looked at him gravely and sadly. ♦

(*Translated, from the German, by Anthea Bell.*)

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BOOKS

WAUGH STORIES

Life in a literary dynasty.

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

Alexander Waugh, the grandson of Evelyn, has written a book, "Fathers and Sons" (Nan A. Talese/Doubleday; $27.50), about the father-son relationships—dramas, often, of mutual incomprehension and dismay—in five successive generations of his family. First comes Alexander Waugh (1840-1906), known as the Brute, a surgeon and a paragon of Victorian masculinity in its most unappealing aspects. The Brute loved to whip his dog. On display in his library were repulsive specimens that he had collected in his medical-school days, including a congealed substance called the White Blood. The Brute begat Arthur (1866-1943), made by God, it seems, to give pain to his father. Arthur, Alexander tells us, was a mama's boy, "scared of the organ in church, scared of twigs in the garden... scared of scissors, scared of lemonade." He grew up to be a man of letters: he wrote biographies of Tennyson, Browning, and Wordsworth, and he was the managing director of Chapman and Hall, an important publishing house in London. Arthur had two sons, both of them novelists. The first was Alec (1898-1981), who, in the words of his nephew, "wrote many books, each worse than the last." The second was Evelyn (1903-66), the greatest comic novelist of the twentieth century. Evelyn's first son was Auberon (1939-2001), a prolific, vituperative, funny, and famous journalist in London in the closing decades of the century. Auberon sired Alexander (born in 1963), who for some years was a composer and a music critic, then began writing books of general interest, including "Time" (2000), "God" (2002), and now this account of his crusty forefathers.

"Fathers and Sons" is witty, in the Waugh manner, but it is also poignant, especially regarding the relationship between Arthur and his two sons. No man ever loved a child more than Arthur loved Alec—"son of my soul," as he called him. He seems to have spent almost every hour of his non-work time talking to the boy, reading to him, taking walks with him. When Alec went away to his father's alma mater, Sherborne, the child and the school fused, in Arthur's mind, into one refulgent idol. He spent every weekend at Sherborne, visiting Alec and his friends, whom he wooed to become his friends. He said that he dreamed every night of being a new boy at the school. He and Alec wrote to each other daily, and Arthur awaited Alec's letters, Alexander says, like a teen-ager in love. (If a letter arrived after he left for work, his wife would travel across London to bring it to his office.) Alexander thinks that Arthur, because of his tortured relations with the Brute, never had a proper childhood. Now he had one: Alec's.

Then Alec, in his next-to-last year, was caught in flagrante with another boy. (Alexander says they may have been doing nothing more than kissing.) As a courtesy to his father, he was allowed to finish the term before leaving the school, but the other boys were instructed to shun him. Arthur was heartbroken, but he did not reproach Alec. On the contrary, he saw his son as a persecuted Jesus, and himself as the grieving Father. He wrote to Alec of a crucifix he once saw, with the figure of God hovering behind the dying Christ: "The nails that pierce the Son's hands pierce the Father's also: the thorn-crowned head of the Dying Saviour is seen to be lying upon the Father's bosom. And it is always so with you and me. Every wound that touches you pierces my own soul also: every thorn in your crown of life tears my tired head as well.... With deep love and unfaltering trust, still and always, your ever devoted and hopeful Daddy."

Two years later, at the age of nineteen, Alec published his first novel, "The Loom of Youth" (1917), which takes place at a school easily recognizable, to those in the know, as Sherborne. Among its evils is the staff's hypocrisy regarding sexual relations between the boys. Everyone knows that this is going on; the only crime is to get caught. "The Loom of Youth" sold many copies and created a scandal. Impassioned letters ran for weeks in the London press. Arthur was publicly humiliated, and many of his friends dropped him. Nevertheless, his cult of Alec remained unshaken. When Alec married and moved to Sussex, Arthur still spent most weekends with him. "I simply go about thinking of your love for me all the time," he wrote to his son. The wonder in all this is that Alec did not recoil from his father's obsessive devotion. He spent much of his adult life travelling. This started early, and it may have been his way of putting some distance between himself and Arthur, but in his many autobiographical writings he never spoke of his father with anything but love, and, apart from publishing books with hot sex scenes ("The Loom of Youth" was only the beginning), he treated the old man kindly till the day he died.

The same cannot be said of Evelyn. Alec was five when Evelyn was born, but he later recalled that he felt like an only child throughout his youth; Evelyn was "no more than an encumbrance in a corner." That is certainly the way Arthur viewed his second son. When Evelyn asked for a bicycle, Arthur went out and bought one for Alec. When Alec wanted a billiard table, it was installed in Evelyn's nursery. (Presumably, it would have taken up too much space in Alec's room.)

Three generations, from left: Auberon, Alexander, and Evelyn Waugh, at Combe Florey, the family home, in 1965.

COURTESY ALEXANDER WAUGH

Alec was sent to prep school at nine. Evelyn didn't go until he was fourteen, and then he went to a school, Lancing, that he considered inferior to Sherborne. (Because of "The Loom of Youth," he couldn't go to his brother's school.) When Alec, on vacations, returned to the family's home, Underhill, in Hampstead, Arthur hung a banner in the front hall saying "WELCOME HOME TO THE HEIR OF UNDERHILL." Finally, Evelyn asked Arthur, "When Alec has Underhill and all that's in it, what will be left for me?" Arthur put away the banner, but not his preferences.

The situation was due to more than birth order. Arthur, as his Jesus letter shows, was sentimental and self-dramatizing. Also, he never stopped talking. Several nights a week, after dinner, he would invite the family to join him in his library, where he would read to them at length from his favorite authors, often fixing one member of the family with his eye throughout the recitation. If the text was a play, he would get up and act out the parts. Another opportunity for drama was his chronic asthma. In the throes of an attack, he would cry out to Heaven for release, quoting relevant passages from literature. According to Evelyn, Arthur was also a relentless correspondent: "He answered letters that needed no answer, thanking people who thanked him for a present, so that, when he encountered anyone as punctilious as himself, a correspondence was likely to start which ended only in death."

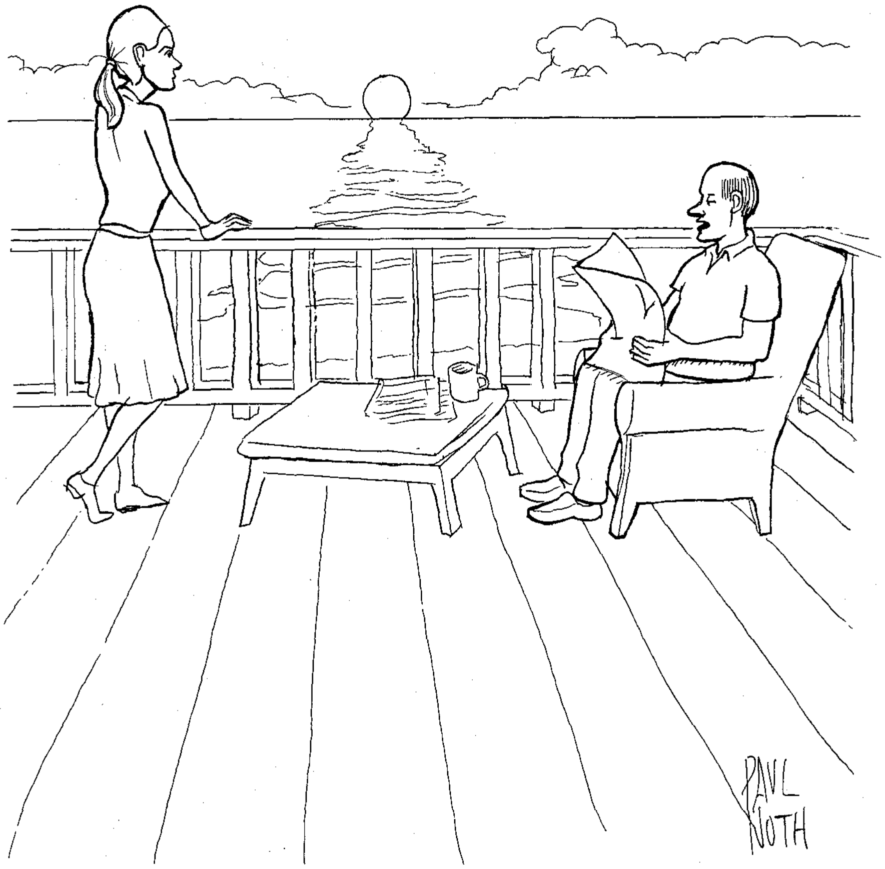
Evelyn was the opposite. From childhood, he had a biting wit and a hyperacute sense of the ridiculous. To Arthur, this was a moral failing, and it no doubt seemed to him more regrettable in that nothing on earth struck Evelyn as more ridiculous than Arthur. Evelyn began insulting him when he was quite young, and, when he became a novelist, he went on doing so. The most boring and sinister character in all his fiction—Mr. Todd, who, at the end of "A Handful of Dust" (1934), imprisons the novel's hero, Tony Last, and makes him read Dickens to him every day for the rest of his life—is based in part on Arthur, who worshipped Dickens. (He was the president of the Dickens Fellowship and the editor of two complete sets of Dickens's work. Chapman and Hall was Dickens's publisher.) Even more striking is Mr. Prendergast, a ludicrous clergyman, in "Decline and Fall" (1928). Alexander explains that Evelyn never used a whole person from his life as the basis for a whole character in his fiction; he combined the traits of one acquaintance with those of another. But anyone who knew the Waughs would not have failed to notice that Prendergast displayed a number of Arthur’s signal characteristics. Prendergast becomes the chaplain in a prison, where he is beheaded by a lunatic inmate. Paul Pennyfeather, the novel’s hero, who is serving time in the prison, finds out about this belatedly, because, as a rule, he is not allowed to speak to the other prisoners. His only chance to communicate with them is during morning hymns. The day after Prendergast’s mishap, Paul is in chapel next to his friend Philbrick, who knows the story. The hymn strikes up:

> “O God, our help in ages past,” [sang Paul].
> “Where’s Prendergast to-day?”
> “What, ain’t you ’eard? ’e’s been done in.”
> “And our eternal home.”
>
> “Old Prendy went to see a chap
> What said he’d seen a ghost;
> Well, he was dippy, and he’d got
> A mallet and a saw.”
>
> “Who let the madman have the things?”
> “The Governor; who d’you think?
> He asked to be a carpenter,
> He sawed off Prendy’s head. . . .”
>
> “Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
> Bears all its sons away.”
> “Poor Prendy ’ollered fit to kill
> For nearly ’alf an hour.” . . .
> “Amen.”

Arthur may have given Evelyn more than material. Alec, in an essay he wrote after his brother’s death, claimed that Arthur was also responsible for the tone of Evelyn’s novels. Evelyn, Alec insists, was a warm, gentle man who made himself seem cold for fear of being like his father. It is not for nothing, Alec says, that Evelyn’s most sentimental book, “Brideshead Revisited” (1945), was written the year after Arthur’s death: “The warning example was now removed.” Also removed was the danger of pleasing his father, by seeming tenderhearted.

This is an interesting argument, but it should be added that Evelyn’s rebellion against Arthur is merely one instance of the most notorious generation gap of the twentieth century, the antagonism between the young people of the nineteen-twenties—known in England as the Bright Young Things—and their parents, whose values, the children felt, had led to the pointless slaughter that was the First World War. In an essay that Evelyn wrote while still in high school, he announced this generation’s coming: “They will be above all things clear sighted. The youngest generation are going to be very hard and analytical and unsympathetic. The young men of the nineties”—Arthur’s generation—“subsisted upon emotion. They poured out their souls like water and their tears with pride; middle-aged observers will find it hard to see the soul in the youngest generation. But they will have—and this is their justification—a very full sense of humor.” His prophecy was correct.

In 1922, Evelyn went up to Hertford College, Oxford, where he soon abandoned his studies in favor of dissipation. Once, when an old alumnus asked him what he did for Hertford, he replied that he drank for it. This time was not wasted—at the sodden lunch parties that he had daily with his friends, he refined his comic skills and his ear for witty dialogue—but he left Oxford in 1924 with no degree and no prospects. During the next four years, he took various small jobs, failing at most of them. He published almost nothing, and no one, Alec says, expected him to become a writer. Indeed, few people expected him to become anything. He drank as much as ever, and suffered black depressions. (In this period, he later recalled, he once tried to commit suicide by swimming out to sea, but he encountered a swarm of jellyfish and hurried back to shore.) Then his luck turned. He got a contract for a biography of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and he managed to write it. He also fell in love, with a young woman named Evelyn Gardner. Her family wanted no part of him. They were aristocrats; he was middle-class, and also penniless. To appease them, and to make some money to get married on, he sat down and in what seems to have been less than eight months wrote his first novel, “Decline and Fall.” In 1928, He-Evelyn and She-Evelyn, as their friends called them, got married. “Decline and Fall” was a success, and it was quickly followed by “Vile Bodies” (1930), which was a best-



“Let’s not ruin this moment by enjoying it.”

seller. Both books dealt with the Bright Young Things; together, they constituted that generation's most vivid and accurate portrait. Waugh became a famous writer and remained so for the rest of his life.

The first thing one notices about Evelyn Waugh's fiction is his breathtaking prose. He seems to have had a richer vocabulary, a keener ear, a wider range of effects—all of this supported by the firm bones of a Latinate syntax—than any English prose writer before or since. Even his smallest, transitional passages are exquisitely worked. Here, from "Vile Bodies," is a carful of drunks returning home from the races:

> Darkness fell during the drive back. It took an hour to reach the town. Adam and Miles and Archie Schwert did not talk much. The effects of their drinks had now entered on that secondary stage, vividly described in temperance hand-books, when the momentary illusion of well-being and exhilaration gives place to melancholy, indigestion and moral decay. Adam tried to concentrate his thoughts upon his sudden wealth [he thinks he's won some money], but they seemed unable to adhere to this high pinnacle, and as often as he impelled them up, slithered back helplessly to his present physical discomfort.

Waugh was young (twenty-five) when he wrote this, and so he is spreading his plumage a little. Later, his prose became simpler, and more beautiful.

Such writing could become heavy after a while, but it is constantly refreshed by tart dialogue. Waugh, it seems, could do any voice—of any nationality, social class, age, profession, temperament—and make it sound as if it were speaking, that very moment, two feet away. Another balancing factor is Waugh's extreme economy in laying out his story. As good as what he tells us is what he doesn't tell us, or only reveals later, through the mouthpiece of someone who witnessed the event, or heard about it. (See Philbrick's account of the murder of Prendergast.) His use of point of view could pass inspection by Henry James. But his most striking gift is his sheer writerly tact. He knows exactly when to cut something off, and he never explains a joke.

As a result, he was, in the words of his son Auberon, "the funniest man of his generation." People have said that every novelist has only one book in him; if so, Waugh's was a version of "Candide." In novel after novel, he shows us a naïve, good man wandering through a bad world, which, as he tries to make sense of it, reveals itself in all its hilarious shockingness. This was Waugh's favorite joke, a Wildean joke: moral blindness, asserted without shame. In "Black Mischief" (1932), which is set in an African country, the hero, Basil Seal, arrives at the British legation to announce that civil war has erupted in the nation. "I think it's very mischievous of you saying all this," the legate's wife, Lady Courteney, replies. "You're just *talking*. Now go and get yourself some whiskey . . . and I think you might put that dirty gun outside in the lobby." She is English, and upper-class, and if the people of this strange, hot country to which her family has been posted have begun killing one another, that is no concern of hers.

This is the soil from which Waugh reaps his comic harvest, but his books wouldn't have lasted if they did not contain a serious moral drama. A year after his marriage, Waugh, sitting in a country inn, writing "Vile Bodies," received a letter from She-Evelyn saying that she was having an affair and wanted a divorce. He never got over it. In most of his novels, the hero falls in love with a beautiful woman who speedily betrays him. Waugh was loyal to the generation of the twenties—in English fiction, he was its leader—but he soon began worrying about its morals. Alec recalled that after receiving She-Evelyn's fatal letter Evelyn said to him, "The trouble about the world today is that there's not enough religion in it. There's nothing to stop young people doing whatever they feel like doing at the moment." In 1930, shortly after the end of his marriage, he converted to Roman Catholicism—an action that probably fortified his gift for comedy. The Church of Rome, more than any other Christian persuasion, sees the world as fallen. Pledged to that faith, Waugh could go on having fun with the world's wickedness. Most of his people behave badly; he likes them anyway, and makes us like them. Nevertheless, he took sin seriously and wondered how goodness could survive against it. This problem underlies all his novels. In some, above all "A Handful of Dust," from his early period, and his Second World War trilogy, published between 1952 and 1961—"Men at Arms," "Officers and Gentlemen," and "Unconditional Surrender" (or "The End of the Battle," as it was called in its American edition)—the struggle between good and evil is pushed to the forefront, and these are his finest books. They are also his most pessimistic.

But the morals didn't get in the way of the comedy, some of which is directed at people whom, today, we are disposed to rescue from a history of abuse. An important character in "Black Mischief" is known to her friends as Black Bitch. Her countrymen squat on their haunches and polish their teeth with sticks. They all but have bones in their noses. Yet, in his treatment of Africans and other groups foreign to him, Waugh was in complete agreement with most of the educated people of his time and class. Their views have gone to the grave with them. His have survived, because they are enshrined in his marvellous novels, and therefore we have the opportunity to be shocked by him. Furthermore, Waugh didn't just make fun of today's targeted minorities; he made fun of everyone. Here, from "Decline and Fall," is his description of a group of Welsh musicians arriving to play at a school festivity:

> Ten men of revolting appearance were approaching from the drive. They were low of brow, crafty of eye and crooked of limb. They advanced huddled together with the loping tread of wolves, peering about them furtively as they came . . . they slavered at their mouths, which hung loosely over their receding chins, while each clutched under his ape-like arm a burden of curious and unaccountable shape. On seeing the Doctor they halted and edged back, those behind squinting and mouthing over their companions' shoulders.

In "Black Mischief," the Europeans, the would-be bringers of civilization, are satirized much more wickedly—and much more pointedly, in moral terms—than the Africans. When, at the end of the book, Lady Courteney's nymphomaniac daughter is eaten for dinner at a tribal gathering, we don't cry for her.

Evelyn was not a good father. The thing he feared most in life was boredom, Alexander tells us, and the six children he had by his second wife, Laura Herbert, often bored him to death. His diaries and letters are filled with unaffectionate references to them. ("Teresa's voice odious, Bron [Auberon] lazy . . . Harriet mad.") When they were home from school, he took dinner in his library.

They were glad of this, for they were afraid of him, as was almost everyone he knew. "He spent his life," Auberon later wrote, "seeking out men and women who were not frightened of him. Even then, he usually ended up getting drunk with them, as a way out of the abominable problem of human relations."

That was not the only circumstance in which he was drunk. The cycling depression that he developed in his youth dogged him all his life, and he treated it with alcohol. Auberon recalls that he could tell when his father was at home, because of the "miasma compounded of Havana cigar smoke and gin" issuing from the library. Together with the gin, Evelyn dosed himself heavily with chloral bromide, a sleeping medication, and the combination eventually resulted in a spell of paranoid hallucinations—an experience he recorded in his odd and excellent late novel "The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold" (1957). He did not learn a lesson from this. He just switched to paraldehyde and gin. Like many first-rate writers of his generation, he was intoxicated most of the day, every day. This no doubt exacerbated his annoyance with his children, and the cruelty with which he expressed it.

Auberon, as the oldest boy and hence the child he held to the highest standard, seemed to him a special disappointment—not without reason. By the time Auberon entered puberty, he was, by his own account, "something approaching a professional criminal." While he was at prep school—Downside, run by Benedictine monks—he founded an organization called the Downside Numismatic Society and rented a room for it in the town. There he and his friends went to smoke and play cards. When a group of prefects skeptical of the boys' numismatic interests interrupted their activities, Auberon called the police. He appears also to have set fire to the school, though Alexander thinks that was an accident. After Downside, he joined the Army and was posted to Cyprus, where, one day, he decided that the machine gun attached to his armored car was not functioning properly. He got out, stood in front of the gun barrel, and fiddled with the mechanism—successfully, for the gun resumed firing, and shot six bullets, point blank, into his chest. He lost his spleen, one of his lungs, two ribs, and part of a hand. When his parents were informed that he would probably die, Laura came to Cyprus, but Evelyn didn't. To him, this was probably just another one of Auberon's derelictions. The boy, at the time, was eighteen.

Auberon later wrote that his father was sometimes capable of great kindness. (Once, when Auberon was in the hospital as a child, recovering from an eye operation, Evelyn arrived with a box of white mice hidden under his overcoat, as a treat.) Furthermore, however much antagonism reigned between father and son when they were living under the same roof, they wrote each other wonderful, entertaining, affectionate letters when they were apart, which was most of the time. In Auberon's letters to Evelyn, he seems to speak to him as an equal, telling him stories, feeding him material, as it were. He did this consciously, he later confessed: "Nothing ever happened to me while he was alive but I mentally subedited it into a report which would be sent to him in my next letter." Both of them writers, they were most generous to each other in writing. About five years before his death, Evelyn "lost all terror," Auberon says—he became benevolent, mild—and from then on the two men enjoyed a "distinct cordiality." Auberon does not add that this change in Evelyn was accompanied by another: his writing slipped terribly. Eventually, he put down his pen and devoted his days to crossword puzzles and gin. He longed for death, and at sixty-two he got it, from what is said to have been a heart attack. Auberon, an honest man, recalls that when he received the news, what he felt, mainly, was relief: "His death lifted a great brooding awareness not only from the house but from the whole of existence."

Auberon married young, and the woman he chose, Teresa Onslow, was, like his mother, from a noble family. They had four children, in short order. Auberon published his first novel, "The Foxglove Saga," when he was twenty, and then he wrote four more, but eventually he decided that they weren't very good. Alexander thinks that he may also have gotten tired of hearing his novels compared unfavorably to Evelyn's. In any case, he gave up on fiction and devoted himself entirely to journalism. Over the years, he worked, it seems, for every newspaper in London, plus several magazines, but his longest stay was at the satirical biweekly *Private Eye*. Though he wrote on many subjects—politics, books, wine, food, nature—his specialty was the short, comic "diary" column, which is what he produced for fourteen years at *Private Eye*. In an entry from December, 1981, he notes that two headless bears are said to have been found in the river at Hackney: "Immediately one begins to feel alarmed for several of one's friends.... I have not seen Geoffrey Wheatcroft for some time." A week later, he describes *The Spectator's* Christmas party, where the main speech was given by Sir Peregrine Worsthorne. He adds that Sir Peregrine's father, the Colonel, "used sometimes to be seen in bed with Eartha Kitt although it is thought that no impropriety occurred." The next month, he reports on the activities of Women Against Rape. "What do they propose to put in its place?" he asks. Elsewhere, he takes out after Admiral Sir Alexander Gordon-Lennox, the sergeant-at-arms of the House of Commons, who, understandably, has been reluctant to give Auberon a press pass. When a small bomb goes off in Westminster Palace, Auberon accuses Sir Alexander of having farted.

He did not mince words about what such writing constituted. "Vulgar abuse," he called it, and he stood up for it. "Vituperation is not a philosophy of life nor an answer to all life's ills. It is merely a tool, a device.... It redresses some of the forces of deference which bolster the conceit of the second-rate; it also prevents the first-rate from going mad with conceit." He felt that mockery was a British specialty and that this made "life in Britain preferable to life anywhere else." His own leadership in the field endeared him to many, while others responded to his writings with quaking rage and, sometimes, libel suits. Auberon's favorite target was liberal reform, which made a vigorous showing in England in the nineteen-seventies. In his columns, he repeatedly insulted the working classes; he warned against the dangers of breast-feeding. In "Fathers and Sons," Alexander reports that Auberon always defended corporal punishment in schools, or at least in Catholic schools, where, he argued, it relieved the monks of the strains of celibacy. A beating, he said, was "a small sacrifice for a boy and a great treat for a monk." Once, when, as Auberon tells it, he "repeated an old army joke about the curious trousers worn by men in certain parts of the near East," the British Council Library in Rawalpindi was burned to the ground. That time, he got fired.

People who knew Auberon only from his writings were always surprised, when they met him, to discover what a genial man he was. He also turns out to have been the best father of those surveyed in "Fathers and Sons." He "was never—well, hardly ever—sharp with us," Alexander writes, and he was huge fun to be with. He loved games; he loved dinner; he would sing Offenbach with a glass of port balanced on his head. Alexander recalls that his school friends often asked Auberon, with horror, what had happened to his left index finger, which the accident in Cyprus had reduced to a stump. He would explain to them that it "had been bitten off by a Royal Bengal Tiger . . . or had dropped off, quite inexplicably, that very morning."

Auberon was also wise, as is clear from his autobiography, "Will This Do?," which he wrote when he was in his fifties. All the Waugh literary men produced histories of themselves and their family. Auberon's is the best—far better than Evelyn's "A Little Learning" (1964), a late, bored book—and one of the finest things in it is his discussion of his mother, Laura. Alexander, too, is very good on Laura. Though she came from an old and rich family, she hated ostentation. Most days, she dressed in trousers belted with twine. If she had to go to a party, she wore an old, largely hairless Astrakhan coat, also belted with twine. (It had had a proper belt, but apparently she lost it.) She cared as little for her family's wardrobe as for her own. Alexander writes that when the time came for her daughters to go to boarding school it turned out that they owned no underpants. Laura told their nanny to sew up the front of Auberon's old undershorts for them. The nanny, scandalized, sneaked into town and bought them underwear with her own money.

Laura deplored the whole circus surrounding Evelyn's fame and almost never attended official occasions with him. Basically, she didn't like human company very much. She kept cows, and "she loved them extravagantly," Auberon writes, "as other women love their dogs or, so I have been told, their children." Next in her affections was her gardener, Mr. Coggins, who would linger with her in the pasture and discuss the cows. After Evelyn died, Coggins vanished. He soon returned—he was just on a bender—but in his absence Laura became convinced that Auberon had murdered him. ("I know where you've hidden the body," she hissed at him during Evelyn's funeral.) Without Evelyn to support her, Laura decided that she had to put the family's grand home—Combe Florey, in Somerset—on the market, but she didn't really want to sell it. So, Alexander says, "when prospective buyers came round she poured buckets of water through the floorboards and ordered her dog, Credit, to shit on the carpets." No one bought Combe Florey. Eventually, Auberon and his family moved in with Laura.

When Laura was not tending to her cows, Auberon says, she occupied herself with jigsaw puzzles, or "retreated into her own private meditations whose direction was not easily to be distinguished from simple misanthropy." In her widowhood, she consoled herself with sherry. Alexander, as a boy, would often visit her in her wing of the house. Together, they would play games with plastic cows on her kitchen table. He recalls, "I particularly liked the smell that attached to all her jerseys—sherry, French cigarettes, and dog baskets all blended into one, a lovely Granny fragrance." Alexander's and Auberon's combined portrait of her is a superb comedy, shaded with sorrow—for her children (she was almost as neglectful a parent as Evelyn) and also for her. She *cannot* have found it easy to be Evelyn's wife. "Perhaps," Auberon writes, "she would have had a happier life if she had married someone else, but I am not really all that sure how happy anyone's life is, when one comes to examine it." She died at fifty-six, of pneumonia. Auberon, too, died early, at sixty-one, of heart failure. "Better to go,"

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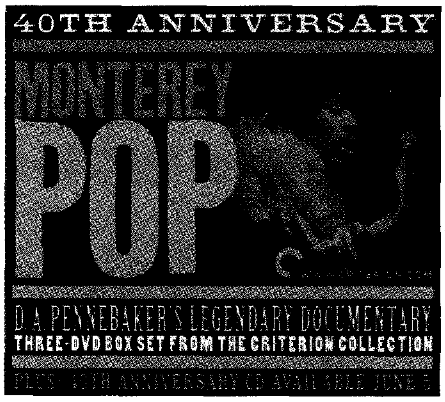
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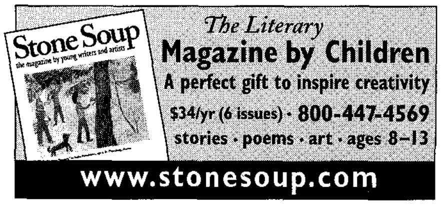
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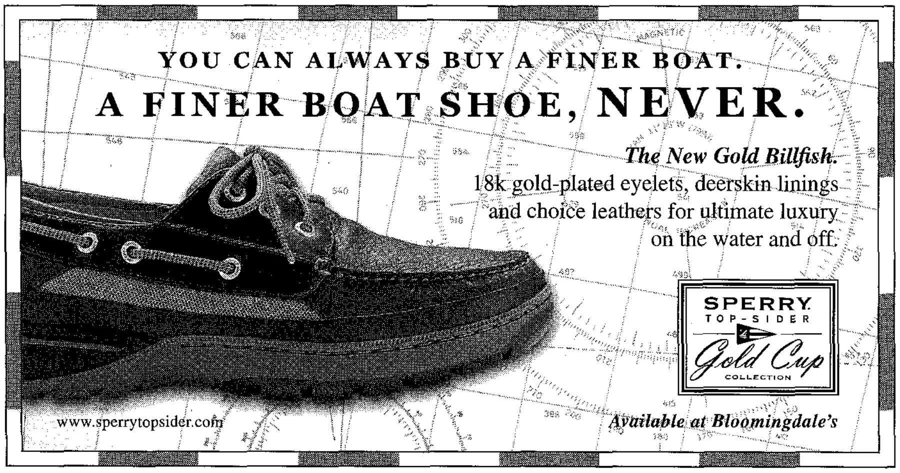
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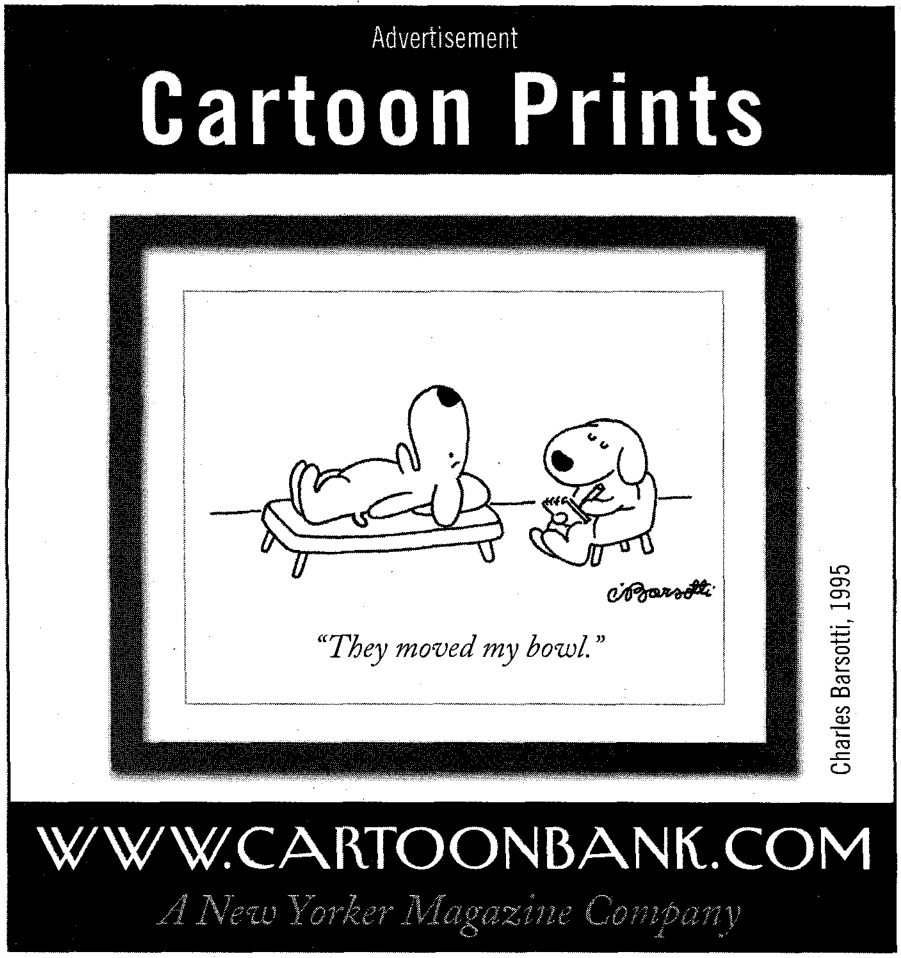
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he said, "than sit around being a terrible old bore."

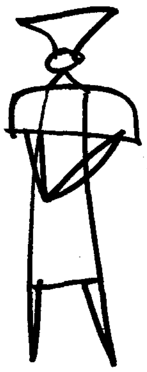
Alexander's and Auberon's books also give us a taste of London journalism, which in Auberon's time was very gloves-off. Stabs in the back, vendettas, letter-writing campaigns, lawsuits: what drama! Writers called people piss pots, poltroons, dog sodomists—almost everything but drunks. (Drunkenness was not considered a vice.) English journalism is much the same today. In that world, Don Imus might have been sued, but he probably wouldn't have been fired.

The rowdiness was not confined to journalism. "Fathers and Sons," together with Auberon's memoir and Evelyn's novels, puts us back in touch with a vanished world, that of the English upper and upper-middle classes in the years surrounding the First and Second World Wars. These people were extremely insular, and therefore confident. If something seemed silly to them, or even just unusual, they didn't mind making jokes about it. They were not as nice as we are, and they were much funnier. They drank from noon to night and wrote their books young and fast. Even Evelyn, the gloomiest of the lot, seems to have had a capacity for enjoyment (at least in his writing) that we barely understand, and that is not to speak of Auberon. Alexander is tamer and tenderer, but he shows the same trait. At one point, he remembers Combe Florey, "a shambling fortress of creaky stairs and alien smells. Chief among its attractions—at any rate to a seven-year-old boy—were a life-sized carved wooden lion in the hall; Victorian painted furniture by William Burges; a stuffed white owl whose wing I could remove by lifting the glass dome that covered it and yanking; . . . a crystal chandelier that tinkled when you punched it; a ferocious gander called Captain, whose attacks we fended off with umbrellas." The Waughs had stuffed owls and homicidal ganders and knickerless children, running wild. That's not what most of us have anymore, but it is impossible to read this passage without thinking of the inherited vigor of English literature—the sheer, knotty concreteness of it, sometimes rude, always robust—from Chaucer on down. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Last One In, *by Nicholas Kulish (Harper Perennial; $13.95).* Kulish launches his clever, affecting novel as a fish-out-of-water narrative: a New York gossip columnist is sent to cover the Iraq war (that, or get fired for a libellous mistake) and is embedded with the Marines. Jimmy Stephens, the reporter, is portrayed as something of a naïf; trying on his protective clothing, he "didn't entirely understand why people on both sides were about to die." There is comedy (a dimwitted network correspondent provides some of it), and Kulish's affection for the Marines is palpable. There is considerably less laughter, though, when the invasion begins and Kulish (who was himself embedded with a Marine attack-helicopter unit) describes the sights and emotions of warfare. Through Jimmy's increasingly fearful and perceptive eyes, the conflict is a cruel, mismanaged catastrophe from the very first shot.

Inglorious, *by Joanna Kavenna (Metropolitan; $25).* "You're depressed," a doctor tells Rosa, the thirty-five-year-old heroine of this début novel. It is one of many simplistic diagnoses offered by Rosa's acquaintances, who are shocked when, months after her mother's death, she quits her job as a newspaper writer, is dumped by her boyfriend, and rapidly sinks into debt. To Rosa, her condition feels like anything but depression; she has a sense of excitement, of the tumult of her thoughts, of being "driven towards an end that I do not know." Kavenna pursues the causes and trajectory of a nervous breakdown with a relentlessness that comes close to overwhelming the minimal plot; still, her understanding of the complexity of depression and her evocation of her heroine's bewilderment are precise, and Rosa, for all her misery, has an appealing and often funny voice.



Contested Waters, *by Jeff Wiltse (North Carolina; $29.95).* The first public swimming pools in the United States were "large community bath tubs"—indoors, relatively small, and intended to encourage good hygiene among the poor. By the nineteen-twenties, pools had become elaborate "public amusements," accommodating thousands. Wiltse's history argues that, at every turn, these sites of "intimate and prolonged contact" between swimmers of different races, genders, and social classes stirred intense conflict. The book is most incisive in its discussion of swimming pools as what one editorialist called "one of the touchiest problems in race relations." Between the wars, swimming pools began to mix the genders, but African-Americans were gradually excluded from the "sexually charged" spaces. In the fifties and sixties, as civil-rights activists persevered in the courts, many cities chose to close municipal pools rather than integrate them.

Mingering Mike, *by Dori Hadar (Princeton Architectural Press; $24.95).* In the late nineteen-sixties, Mike Stevens, a teen-aged ghetto daydreamer in Washington, D.C., imagined a fabulous existence as Mingering Mike, a soul-music superstar, and he hand-painted a series of colorfully exuberant record-album jackets representing his explosive career. Between 1968 and 1977, he painted some fifty LP covers and nearly as many 45 r.p.m. picture sleeves (inserting cardboard disks with labels and even painted grooves). Into this fictive discography he wove an elaborate personal mythology; pictures, titles, and liner notes incorporate many references to his neighborhood and his family. The covers were discovered at a flea market by Hadar, an R. & B. record collector who subsequently tracked down Stevens. Hadar has clearly discovered a true outsider artist, and the naïve charm of the album covers is a reminder that the greatest pop musicians succeed at implying an entire world as dazzlingly seductive as their songs.

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BOOKS

HIS DARK MATERIALS

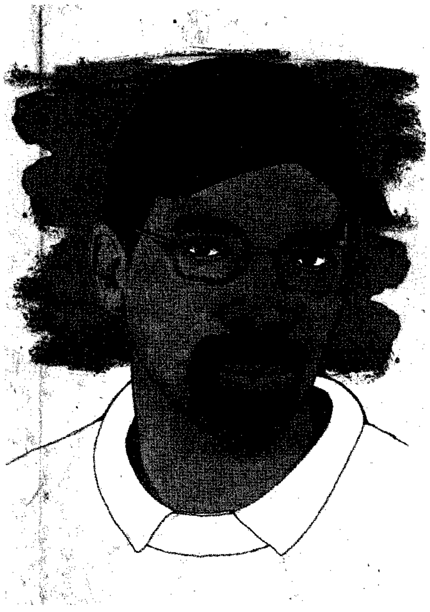
Bloodshed among the black bourgeoisie.

BY JOYCE CAROL OATES

"An obsession with pigmentation is even now the curse of our race," says the narrator of Stephen L. Carter's celebrated first novel, "The Emperor of Ocean Park," published in 2002. The line could serve as an epigraph for Carter's new, equally ambitious novel, "New England White" (Knopf; $26.95). Both books are, defiantly, loose baggy monsters, fusing such popular genres as the mystery, the thriller, the academic satire, the domestic family melodrama, and the seriocomic social novel; both are meditations on race by sharp-eyed citizens of the "darker nation" uneasily dwelling within the "paler nation"—in the fictitious New England university town of Elm Harbor and its neighboring village, Tyler's Landing, the "heart of whiteness." Tyler's Landing is a place where local residents are quick to declare that they have "nothing against the coloreds" but nonetheless keep a precise count of how many African-American families live in their community.

In "New England White," the new president of the university is the formidable former White House counsel Lemaster Carlyle, Barbados-born, a "tough little spark-plug of a man" who has been introduced in "The Emperor of Ocean Park" as a "nearly perfect politician" and a founder of a "forgotten organization called Liberals for Bush." (In the new novel, we learn that he was a college roommate—and is seemingly still a close friend—of the current incumbent of the Oval Office.) He and his wife, Julia, from whose perspective most of "New England White" is narrated, constitute "the most celebrated couple in African America's lonely Harbor County outpost." Yet more awkwardly for Elm Harbor's color-conscious locals, the town's first murder victim in decades, Kellen Zant, a flamboyantly driven economist and one-time lover of Julia Carlyle, also happens to be black.

The search for the identity of Zant's killer, the circumstances involving Zant's own investigation into a thirty-year-old mystery (a rape-murder of a white girl by, allegedly, a black boy, who was slain by police before he could be tried), the myriad snarled connections between the Carlyles and the murder victim: these provide "New England White" with the considerable fuel required to maintain narrative momentum through more than five hundred pages. As a murder mystery, the novel moves, at times, with unusual deliberation, for it is the author's intention not to "tell" a story but to show how an essential story has been mistold in the struggle to define the truth. Here, the truth is about who killed the teen-age girl, why the suspect may have been killed without provocation, and why no one in power has been willing to talk about the episode. It sounds like a familiar situation, with ugly racist overtones, but it's one that Carter handles with audacious originality. In the novel's Manichaean universe—a universe that lends itself readily to Hawthornian allegory of the kind New Englanders are bred to appreciate—"good" people (in this case, of the darker nation) must combat "evil" people, by the strategy not of frontal attack, nor even of public exposure, but of seizing secrets, and exploiting them. It's as if the world were held together not by ties of blood and kinship but sheerly by the relay circuits of power: you will respect me because I know a terrible truth about you, and I will not reveal this terrible truth because, if I do, I will lose my power over you. As we're told in the novel's concluding pages, "The world is full of secrets people manage to keep."



Stephen L. Carter

BARRY FALLS

In both "New England White" and "The Emperor of Ocean Park," the basic mystery becomes tangled in subplots, flashbacks, masterly thumbnail portraits, and acerbic asides on such facets of haute-black-bourgeois society as the "club life of the darker nation." It can be easy to lose one's way. If the reader perseveres, however, Carter's deftly orchestrated clockwork plot resolves itself satisfactorily, at least for the first couple of Harbor County's darker nation.

Though "New England White" is only Carter's second work of fiction, he has long been a highly respected law scholar and public intellectual, the author of books on subjects like affirmative action and the place of religion in the public sphere. A professor of law at Yale since 1982, Carter takes care in the author's notes to his novels to discourage the reader from assuming that he has written a roman à clef, or that Elm Harbor is a "thinly disguised New Haven"—though Carter cannot resist adding that the two towns "share a lot of the same ghosts."

Whether Talcott Garland is an utter invention or the author's Dostoyevskian double, it is Garland's unsparing, often corrosive voice that gives much of "The Emperor of Ocean Park" a mesmerizing authenticity. Garland is the aggrieved younger son of a once distinguished and now notorious African-American judge with such impeccable conservative credentials that he was a Reagan nominee to the United States Supreme Court, although his Senate confirmation hearings ended in bitter defeat and public humiliation. After his father's fall, the emotionally withdrawn Garland succumbs to fugues of rage. There are flashes of resentment toward his rich white brother-in-law, as toward the hustlers and poseurs of his own color:

> So now it is my turn to be offended...on behalf of the race: my vision is suddenly overlaid with bright splotches of red, a thing that happens from time to time when my connection to the darker nation and its oppression is most powerfully stimulated. The room fades around me. Through the red curtain, I still see, albeit dimly, these ambitious black kids in their ambitious little suits... vying for the favor of my brother-in-law because he is a managing director at Goldman Sachs, and I suddenly understand the passion of the many black nationalists of the sixties who opposed affirmative action, warning that it would strip the community of the best among its potential leaders, sending them off to the most prestigious colleges, and turning them into...well, into young corporate apparatchiks in Brooks Brothers suits, desperate for the favor of powerful white capitalists....I am the few. My wife is the few. My sister is the few.... And the world is such a bright, angry red.

Even Garland's pride in his family is derived from a racial distinction: "Ours is an old family, which, among people of our color, is a reference less to social than to legal status. Ancestors of ours were free and earning a living when most members of the darker nation were in chains.... Like good Americans, we not only forgive the crime of chattel slavery but celebrate the criminals." As Julia Carlyle's grandmother observed, "There are our black people and there are other black people."

While Talcott Garland is brooding, inclined to melancholia, prematurely middle-aged, suspicious of his wife's fidelity, Hamlet-like in his obsession with avenging his disgraced father, Julia Carlyle, the still point within the bustling plot of "New England White," is one of those sweetly accommodating African-American liberals whom Garland scorns. As first glimpsed by Garland in "The Emperor of Ocean Park," Julia is Lemaster Carlyle's "perfect wife . . . as small and dark and cute as Lemaster himself." In "New England White," though, an omniscient narrator notes that "her skin was many shades lighter than his blue-black." Unlike the misanthropic Garland, Julia, "the most popular girl at her New Hampshire high school," seems incapable of disliking anyone; she feels more sympathy than vindictiveness toward her ex-lover Kellen Zant, despite the fact that he had abused her emotionally and may have had sexual designs on her troubled seventeen-year-old daughter, Vanessa.

Julia is a lovely woman whom we would all wish for a friend, but, as the heroine of a novel with action-thriller scenes of physical combat and flight, she is an unconvincing choice. For one so preoccupied with color, Julia is oddly colorless. Melodramatic scenes in which this petite wife and mother staves off a murderous villain strain credibility. The intrusion of unabashedly "action thriller" material into a normally slow-evolving narrative characterized by lengthy passages of exposition and introspection is jarring and seems to undercut the seriousness of Carter's intentions.

Though there is much to admire in "New England White," especially in the interstices of the mystery plot, the novel seems to lack the vigor, intensity, and air of authenticity of its predecessor. Julia Carlyle doesn't have the perverse charisma of *ressentiment* that makes Talcott Garland so effective a narrator. Where the fall of the brilliant Judge Garland, in "The Emperor of Ocean Park," has a tragic grandeur that helps the novel overcome its genre underpinnings, the womanizing Kellen Zant, an "old faker" who "Mau-Maued everybody into hiring him" and "made a fortune off of being the official, true-blue, certified Negro economist," has so little gravitas that the quest to find his murderer lacks urgency, and the murder mystery becomes purely plot. And where "The Emperor of Ocean Park" ends ambiguously, with Talcott Garland's awareness of his father's complicity in crime, and of his own blighted life, "New England White" ends with an improbable fantasy resolution in which the President of the United States and a powerful senator are held at bay by a canny citizen of the darker nation. Who in the paler nation would guess that "an obscure Harlem men's club, membership limited by charter to 'four hundred colored gentlemen of quality,'" secretly controls "the destiny of the nation"? ♦

Seize any
opportunity,
or
anything that
looks like
opportunity.

**THEY
ARE RARE.**

"A
MASTERPIECE."

—Chris Anderson,
editor in chief of
Wired and author
of *The Long Tail*

LAISSEZ-FAIRE IS MORE

A revisionist history of the Depression.

BY JOHN UPDIKE

As the generations that experienced the Great Depression, even the youngest of them, die off, the period passes into the care of historians. There is a danger, at this remove in time, of Depression nostalgia. T. H. Watkins's "The Great Depression: America in the 1930s," an illustrated print companion to 1993's public-television series of the same name, concludes on a ringing upbeat note:

> In the end, the world of the Great Depression, molded by fear, uncertainty, determination, and a wondrous bravery, gave us the world of our own present hope—and if we shape our world half as well as did the men and women of the 1930s, we will have gone a long way toward honoring our own obligation to the future.

David M. Kennedy's mammoth "Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945" won its author the Pulitzer Prize for the year 2000 and, from the Boston *Globe,* the encomium "This is modern America's story—modern America's most thrilling, most irresistible, and most significant story." If not as thrilling and oft-told as that of American involvement in the Second World War, the decade that preceded the war has received ample attention, from Studs Terkel's book of colloquial, sometimes searing interviews, "Hard Times" (1970), to the tables and hard-core economics of Ben S. Bernanke's "Essays on the Great Depression" (2000). Now we have, in a sprightly contrarian mood, "The Forgotten Man: A New History of the Great Depression," by Amity Shlaes, a syndicated columnist for Bloomberg News and a former member of the editorial board of the *Wall Street Journal* (HarperCollins; $26.95).

Where the words "new history" appear, revisionism will follow. Shlaes's introduction tells us, "It is time to revisit the late 1920s and the 1930s. Then we see that neither the standard history nor the standard rebuttal entirely captures the realities of the period." With a degree of divulgence rare in an introduction, Shlaes lays out her thesis. "The standard history of the Great Depression" is pro-Roosevelt, and is wrong:

> The same history teaches that the New Deal was the period in which Americans learned that government spending was im-

President Roosevelt shakes hands with farmers near Warm Springs, Georgia, in October of 1932.

> portant to recoveries. . . . The attitude is that the New Deal is the best model we have for what government must do for weak members of society, in both times of crisis and times of stability. . . . The New Dealers displayed a sort of dynamism from which today's moribund politicians might learn. . . . FDR saved the country in peace, and then he saved it in war. Or so the story line goes.

Shlaes's story line proposes instead that the nineteen-twenties, far from "a period of false growth and low morals," were "a great decade of true economic gains" whose "faith in laissez-faire" was justified. "American capitalism did not break in 1929. The crash did not cause the Depression. It was a necessary correction of a too-high stock market, but not a necessary disaster." The crash preceded an underlying problem, deflation, caused by not enough money in circulation as banks failed and shut their doors; a number of dollar-starved communities—Salt Lake City; Ventura, California; Yellow Springs, Ohio—issued their own scrip, while Presidents Hoover and then Roosevelt supported policies, like the gold standard, aimed at a nonexistent inflation. There were multiple contributing factors: the stingy Federal Reserve; the "disastrous" Smoot-Hawley tariff, which discouraged foreign trade; higher taxes imposed on a staggering citizenry; freaks of weather like floods and the drought-induced Dust Bowl. But the gravest problem, as Shlaes sees it, was government "intervention, the lack of faith in the marketplace." Both Presidents tried to lift wages, when letting them sink would have liberated businesses to start hiring and resume business as usual. Business knows best.

Hoover, contrary to his popular image as a do-nothing President who hid from the Depression on fly-fishing retreats to his Appalachian camp on Virginia's Rapidan River, was a dynamo, a world-travelling freelance engineer and humanitarian from the West; he had risen to the highest office after energetically performing as Secretary of Commerce for Presidents Harding and Coolidge. "By personality an intervener," he favored government intervention, as long as it didn't violate his sense of the Constitution, and sought control over economic events that would, according to Shlaes, have gone better if left alone. She draws an arresting parallel:

> Hoover and Roosevelt were alike in several regards. Both preferred to control events and people. Both underestimated the strength of the American economy. Both doubted its ability to right itself in a storm. Hoover mistrusted the stock market. Roosevelt mistrusted it more. Roosevelt offered rhetorical optimism, but pessimism underlay his policies. Though Americans associated Roosevelt with bounty, his insistent emphasis on sharing—rationing, almost—betrayed a conviction that the country had entered a permanent era of scarcity. Both presidents overestimated the value of government planning. Hoover, the Quaker, favored the community over the individual. Roosevelt, the Episcopalian, found laissez-faire economics immoral and disturbingly un-Christian.

GETTY IMAGES

In the parade of individuals—some still well known, most now faded into obscurity, almost all of them male public servants—with which, in the three hundred and seventy pages that follow the introduction, Shlaes pursues her thesis through the thirties, few heroes emerge, and the most highly placed two are not apt to figure in many liberal pantheons: Calvin Coolidge and Andrew Mellon. Coolidge, who sardonically called Hoover a "wonder boy" and who memorably stated, "The chief business of the American people is business," is presented as a kind of Zen saint, a pillar of inaction: "Coolidge had long ago determined that the world would do better if he involved himself less. [He] believed that the work of life lay in holding back and shutting out. He conducted his official life according to his own version of the doctor's Hippocratic Oath—first, do no harm." Shlaes hails his decision to leave the Presidency after five and a half years (thus ducking the crash and its consequences) as "another of Coolidge's acts of refraining, his last and greatest."

Andrew Mellon, the Pittsburgh venture capitalist who served Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover as Secretary of the Treasury, presented an even more reserved personality: "More than Coolidge, he hid from newspapermen, even when he had good news." His principal agenda was lowering taxes; he urged thrift, investment in the private sector, and patience. He figures in John Kenneth Galbraith's entertaining and mordant history "The Great Crash, 1929" (1954) as "a passionate advocate of inaction" and the official who, in the month before the crash, assured the public, "There is no cause for worry. The high tide of prosperity will continue." Shlaes views government inaction as generally a beneficial thing, and underlines Mellon's honorableness, private generosity, and public spirit as well as the business acumen that enabled him,

Be fooled
in small
matters,
NOT
IN THE
LARGE.

"One of the
most fun and
challenging
books I've read
in a long time."

—STEPHEN J. DUBNER,
CO-AUTHOR OF
FREAKONOMICS

exploiting the possibilities of Pittsburgh somewhat later than Carnegie and Frick, to assemble a financial empire. In 1934, the Roosevelt Administration prosecuted him for underpaying his taxes by several million dollars in 1931. At the same time, Mellon was firming up plans to donate to the government his priceless art collection and to construct on the Mall a great National Gallery—imagined first as limestone but then promoted to marble. After Roosevelt's crushing victory over Alf Landon, in 1936, Mellon in a brief, personal letter approached the President with his offer to "the people of the United States." The gift met rapid acceptance, although Mellon, who died in 1937, did not live to see the gallery's completion or his exoneration on the count of tax evasion, four months after his death. As Shlaes reads these events, Mellon put his money where his mouth was, demonstrating, in a time of overactive federal government, the power and generosity of the private sector. As she concludes the chapter "Mellon's Gift," her admiration generates a rough-hewn prose couplet: "Mellon might be correct about the Depression being a bad quarter hour. History alone would tell whose edifice had the more enduring power."

She gives Roosevelt a mixed and skeptical report. He was more charming, she has to admit, than Hoover:

> Roosevelt by contrast had a wonderful temperament, and could get along, when he felt like it, with even his worst opponent. His calls for courage, his Fireside Chats, all were intensely important. . . . In the darkness, Roosevelt's voice seemed to shine.

He had the good fortune to be "a great radio speaker born into the era of radio." As an experimenter with the economy, however, he was capricious and vacillating. In his manipulations of gold and the gold standard, according to Shlaes, "FDR's playfulness was at its most destructive." This was no time for playfulness: "Focusing on the fun of experiments neglected the question of whether unceasing experimentation might frighten business into terrified inaction." The plethora of ambitious programs and agencies perpetrated in the first hundred days of the New Deal seemed aimed more at creating a sensation of activity than at achieving feasible objectives: "Americans must know Washington was doing something. If there were contradictions between experiments and within them, well, that did not matter." Shlaes, in a bold stroke of psychologizing, lays the hyperactivity to "the restlessness of the invalid." She goes on, "Like an invalid, the country took pleasure in the very thought of motion." More ominous was Roosevelt's totalitarian tendency: "His remedies were on a greater scale and often inspired by socialist or fascist models abroad."

One of Shlaes's chapter-length detours deals with a junket that, in 1927, on the good ship President Roosevelt (named after Theodore), carried a self-designated "unofficial American trade-union delegation" to investigate and report on conditions in the Soviet Union. A number of these junketeers—the Columbia economist Rexford Guy Tugwell, the economic commentator Stuart Chase, the Chicago labor scholar Paul Douglas—were to become significant supporters of and participants in the New Deal. Toward the end of the junket, this progressive delegation was granted an interview—"A small pockmarked man met them in a cloakroom; Douglas assumed it was an attendant"—with Joseph Stalin, who conversed and answered their questions for more than six hours. Stalin was not wasting his time; wooing susceptible Americans might lead to unofficial U.S. approval if not official recognition of the Soviet Union. Stuart Chase upon his return wrote, "*Laissez-faire* rides well on covered wagons, not so well on conveyor belts and cement roads." Collectivism was the inevitable direction. After all, Chase wrote, "why should Russians have all the fun remaking a world?" The poisoned chalice was passed around. Shlaes names New Dealers with Communist connections—Lauchlin Currie, Harry Dexter White—and supposed spies such as Lee Pressman and Alger Hiss, who "duped colleagues in government repeatedly." But "few New Dealers were spies or even communists," she reassures the reader. "The problem was their naïveté about the economic value of Soviet-style or European-style collectivism—and the fact that they forced such collectivism upon their own country."

Another chapter, "The Chicken Versus the Eagle," takes us through the legal case of a Brooklyn band of brothers, the Schechters, whose name means "ritual butcher" in Yiddish, and whose business was the marketing of kosher chickens. In 1934, Roosevelt's Justice Department prosecuted them under the National Recovery Administration's Code of Fair Competition for the Live Poultry Industry of the Metropolitan Area in and About the City of New York, "a lengthy and forbidding document." The code forbade, among other deleterious practices, so-called "straight killing," which meant that "customers might select a coop or a half coop of chickens for purchase, but they did not 'have the right to make any selection of particular birds.'" Not only did the code unleash upon their business a plague of ignorant and imperious government inspectors, the Schechters argued, but "they were busting in on an intimate private relationship: that of the small businessman with his customer." In their first trial, the chicken venders were found guilty, fined, and sentenced to jail, and the circuit court rejected their appeal; but the Supreme Court, handing down judgment in 1935 in Schechter Poultry Corp. v. United States, unanimously ruled that "the NRA had abused the Schechters, and other businesses, through unconstitutional 'coercive exercise of the law-making powers.'" The London *Express* ran the headline "AMERICA STUNNED! ROOSEVELT'S WORK KILLED IN 20 MINUTES." In response, Roosevelt gave an uncharacteristically intemperate press conference, accusing the Supreme Court of wanting to revert to "the horse and buggy age."

The Schechter case spelled the death of the N.R.A. Dozens of lawsuits and injunctions besieged such New Deal structures as the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Administration's showpiece intervention in the utility industry; and the President, flush with his landslide reëlection in 1936, blatantly overplayed his hand by initiating legislation that would have added a new appointee to the Supreme Court for every Justice over the age of seventy—a measure plainly aimed at the elderly core of judicial resistance to his revolution. The Court bill failed ("dead as a salt mackerel shining beneath the pale moonlight," a Mississippi newspaper gloated), and the Depression slogged on, ending only in 1940, as the government decisively hiked defense spending. Roosevelt's extensive and not especially effectual attempts at collectivism prepared the ground for, it might be said, the most truly collective war effort the nation has ever known, with virtually unresisted conscription, dizzyingly raised taxes, severe rationing, price controls, and patriotic participation by every class of citizen.

Shlaes's thirties chronicle, with its abrupt hopping, chapter to chapter, from one sideshow to another, is not easy to follow. Government officials blend into a gray mass; non-government notables like the black religious preacher Father Divine and the alcoholic co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, Bill Wilson, are dwelt upon to no apparent point except to illustrate the value of self-help and problem-solving without government aid. Many pages toward the end are devoted to building up Wendell Willkie—a man risen from the world of business, like Hoover (and like him called a "wonder boy")—as a sympathetic, charismatic anti-Roosevelt, but it all comes to anticlimax with Roosevelt's easy electoral victory, for an unprecedented third term, in 1940. Willkie in his campaign indicted the President's "philosophy of distributed scarcity" and asserted that it was only "from weakness that people reach for dictators and concentrated government power." These seem to be Amity Shlaes's views also, but in 1940 there was no breaking the bond between Franklin Roosevelt and the bulk of the American people. *Time*, which had backed Willkie, summed it up: "Whether Mr. Roosevelt is Moses or Lucifer, he is a leader."

The Depression was a good time in which to be a sheltered only child. The small town around me didn't change; horse-drawn farm wagons mingled the clip-clop of horseshoes with the swish of automobile tires. The vacant lots remained vacant; shoppers and workers were carried to the nearby city (Reading, Pennsylvania, with its Socialist mayor) on the same swaying, sparking trolley cars; the movies and radio were never more innocently entertaining; the schools were safe and tidy, with girls and boys segregated at recess on the asphalt playground; nickels and pennies counted for something; major-league baseball had two symmetrical leagues of eight teams, with five cities fielding two teams each, as they had for years. A child did not know that change and expansion were the norm for a thriving economy. But the two men of my snug household, my father and my maternal grandfather, had both taken deep economic wounds: my grandfather had lost almost all his investments in the stock-market crash, and my father had been laid off from his job as a happily peripatetic telephone lineman. He endured a long interval of odd jobs and no job, with summer stints on local W.P.A. projects. Fortunately, the town school board eventually hired him, for twelve hundred dollars a year, as a math teacher. The job saved him for respectability, but he never forgot the trauma of being out of work with an infant son and no home of his own, in a world with no economic safety net, just breadlines. Hoover in his obtuse aloofness later wrote of the crisis, "Many persons left their jobs for the more profitable one of selling apples." Shlaes's account of economic-philosophy wars *en haut* in Washington could have done with a little of the gritty testimony Studs Terkel collected, for instance that of Peggy Terry, who remembered of a soup line:

> "So we'd ask the guy that was ladling out the soup into the buckets—everybody had to bring their own bucket to get the soup—he'd dip the greasy, watery stuff off the top. So we'd ask him to please dip down to get some meat and potatoes from the bottom of the kettle. But he wouldn't do it."

My father had been reared a Republican, but he switched parties to vote for Roosevelt and never switched back. His memory of being abandoned by society and big business never left him and, for all his paternal kindness and humorousness, communicated itself to me, along with his preference for the political party that offered "the forgotten man" the better break. Roosevelt made such people feel less alone. The impression of recovery—the impression that a President was bending the old rules and, drawing upon his own courage and flamboyance in adversity and illness, stirring things up on behalf of the down-and-out—mattered more than any miscalculations in the moot mathematics of economics. Business, of which Shlaes is so solicitous, is basically merciless, geared to maximize profit. Government is ultimately a human transaction, and Roosevelt put a cheerful, defiant, caring face on government at a time when faith in democracy was ebbing throughout the Western world. For this inspirational feat he is the twentieth century's greatest President, to rank with Lincoln and Washington as symbolic figures for a nation to live by. ♦

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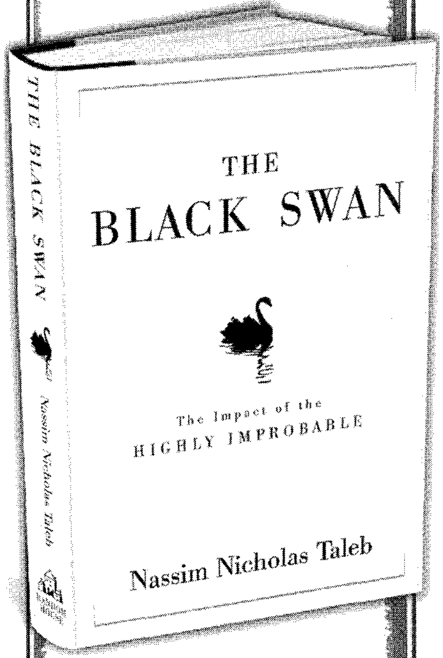

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THE THEATRE

GODS AND DOLLS

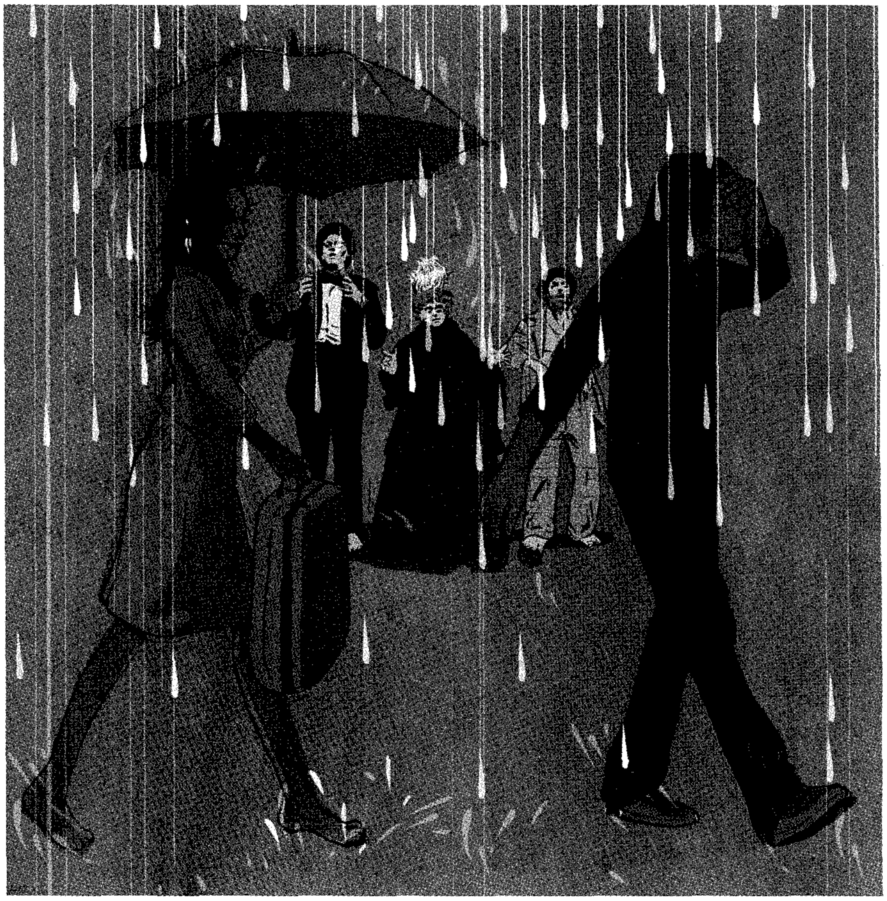
Sarah Ruhl reimagines the Orpheus myth.

BY JOHN LAHR

At the theatre these days, we are rarely asked to play. Producers, who live or die on the accuracy of their reading of the public mood, have registered the current climate of fear and exploited our need for succor. The glut of movies-into-musicals and refurbished revivals is a kind of "Pimp My Mind" of theatre. Audiences are happy to pay top dollar to see what they already know; it's the unknown that petrifies them. Sarah Ruhl's "Eurydice" (at the Second Stage, under the direction of Les Waters), a luminous retelling of the Orpheus myth from his beloved wife's point of view, is exhilarating because it frees the stage from the habitual. Watching it, we enter a singular, surreal world, as lush and limpid as a dream—an anxiety dream of love and loss—where both author and audience swim in the magical, sometimes menacing, and always thrilling flow of the unconscious.

Scott Bradley's set powerfully conjures up Hades: a cavernous shower room, where the echo of dripping water and shimmers of glinting light bounce off hand-lettered aquamarine tiles that cover the walls. Over time, the tiles take on meaning: they are the petitions of the dead to the living—undelivered letters to the bright, silent world above. This deceptively simple and gorgeous stylization mirrors Ruhl's literary attack: an exercise in imaginative freedom, in which riddle and reality coexist, as light as a game and as grave as a decision. Ruhl's theatrical voice is reticent and daring, accurate and outlandish—"the voice that comes from *there*, a *there* that is always *here*," as Octavio Paz wrote of Elizabeth Bishop.

Ruhl shows her whimsical hand in the play's first beat. The lovers sit on a beach—Orpheus (Joseph Parks) in Bermuda shorts, Eurydice (Maria Dizzia) in a cotton sundress. With a flourish, Orpheus gestures to the sky. "All those birds? For me? Thank you," Eurydice says, adding, "And—the sea! Now? It's mine already? Wow." When Orpheus throws in the sky and the stars, Eurydice suggests that he's being "perhaps too generous." The droll lines play on the gush of romantic idealization; Eurydice is a girl who really *has* found her god. Both inhabiting a myth and commenting on it, Ruhl walks a tightrope between the mythic and the mundane. In her retelling, Eurydice is perky and pragmatic. When Orpheus ties a string around her fourth finger to memorialize their love, she prompts, "Maybe you could also get me another ring—a gold one—to put over the string one." Orpheus, for his part, is a slightly goofy-looking artist, always in his own head, hearing the melodies that make him the greatest musician in the universe. Eurydice can't carry a tune; she is, however, a reader, with an appetite for argument, which grates on Orpheus's notion of originality. When Orpheus confides that he has just written a song for her, he adds, tartly, "It's not *interesting* or *not-interesting*. It just is." For him—and, one suspects, for Ruhl—expression is an end in itself.



Maria Dizzia and Joseph Parks make their way out of the underworld in "Eurydice."

RACHEL DOMM

As lovers do, the young couple swear their allegiance; they marry; they dance and sing to "Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree." Then Eurydice, enticed by a Nasty and Interesting Man (Mark Zeisler), who claims to have a letter from her deceased father, wanders off. Her disappearance turns out to be from life itself. "I was not lonely," she says later, in a brilliant speech describing her death, "only alone with myself, begging myself not to leave my own body, but I was leaving." Ruhl concentrates on Eurydice's experience, not Orpheus's: there is no demented wandering, no boy's own subjugation of the guards, no ghoulish dismemberment by Thracian maenads. Eurydice's descent into the underworld is ingeniously indicated by illuminated tiles, which chart her arrival like that of an elevator. When a door in the upstage wall opens, Eurydice is revealed in a downpour, carrying a suitcase and an umbrella, water sluicing onto the tiled floor and over the lip of the stage. The stunning image establishes both the geography of the place and the state of her consciousness, which is being leached of the past. (In Ruhl's underworld, each lost memory is signalled by a ping.) At first, Eurydice is bemused by her forgetfulness; she can't recall Orpheus's name. "I know his name starts with my mouth shaped like a ball of twine," she says. "Oar—oar. I forget." The moment is as punishing as it is poetic. Identity is memory; when memory disappears, the self dissolves and love with it.

Here this nothingness is foreshadowed by a chorus called the Stones (Gian-Murray Gianino, Carla Harting, and Ramiz Monsef)—a trio who speak and move in unison, a sort of vaudeville of vacancy. They can't feel; they can't cry; they can't think. "'Father' is not a word that dead people understand," they tell Eurydice's father (Charles Shaw Robinson), when his daughter fails, at first, to recognize him. "Eurydice" speaks in perfectly pitched images as well as words. It's as if we were gazing at the shadows of a grief beyond language. When Eurydice first arrives in Hades, she insists on finding a place to sleep, not realizing that no one sleeps in the underworld; her father tries to contain her distress by building her a room out of string—a sensational piece of theatrical magic that suggests both a room and the emptiness that fills it.

Although she knows that Orpheus is coming for her, Eurydice confides some ambivalence to her father. "This is what it is to love an artist," she says. "He is always going away from you. Inside his head there is always something more beautiful." Nonetheless, when Orpheus arrives, she follows him. In Bray Poor's evocative soundscape, as Orpheus leads his wife up to the surface, the sound of water dripping gives way to the honking of car horns. Then, as the myth foretells, Orpheus turns at the last minute to look at Eurydice; suddenly, they begin to recede from each other.

"There is never any third act in a nightmare," the critic Max Beerbohm said. "They bring you to a climax of terror and then leave you there. They are the work of poor dramatists." Not in this case. Somehow, this subtle production works the trick of imagining the unimaginable. When, at the finale, Orpheus is in the underworld and can no longer hear the music of the spheres, that small moment of silence is spectacular, full of both woe and wonder.

Love and unresolved Oedipal issues are also the subject of "Rabbit," by Nina Raine, who directs as well (part of the Brits Off Broadway festival, at 59E59), a comedy whose crackling wit deservedly won Raine last year's London *Evening Standard* Theatre Award for Most Promising Playwright. Here a superb ensemble of British actors channels the music of upper-middle-class bitchery, in a deceptive and hilarious game that reveals a lot about the frail and defensive souls who use frivolity as a form of offense. Bella (the outstanding Charlotte Randle), at her twenty-ninth-birthday party, to which she has invited a few twenty-something friends and former lovers, tries to kill her heart with deep dish and drink. "Well, there are only two glasses in a bottle, really," she says, studying an empty. She is obsessed with sex and sass; the play crosscuts between her butting heads with her stubborn dying father (the expert Hilton McRae) and with her friends.

A press representative by trade, she punches below her weight in the workplace, but when it comes to mockery she's a heavyweight contender. "Take your hands off, I don't like being blind," she says to Richard (the superb Adam James), an old flame who still carries a torch for her, when he covers her eyes as he enters. Of course, with her cauterizing wit, Bella is the one who blinds herself to feeling. The play is a hilarious demonstration of how language can spin a web of ignorance around terror. Both as a writer and as a director, Raine has a sinew that is impressive. Her men give as good as they get, especially Richard, a barrister by profession, who contends with sodden but rousing conviction that the problem in the war between the sexes is that women treat men "like a sex object." He goes on, "I hate the way that you women reduce sex in this way. . . . You reduce it to the banal. You reduce it to . . . 'bumhole.' . . . It ruins everything. Where can *love* fit in with that? Romance?" The play doesn't give us the answers, but it raises the questions with terrific brio. ♦

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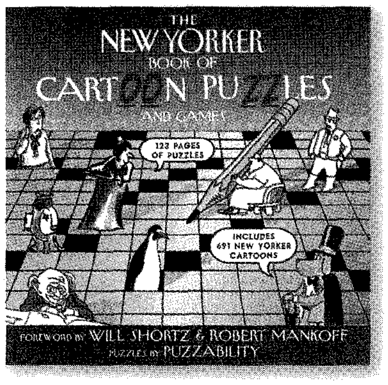
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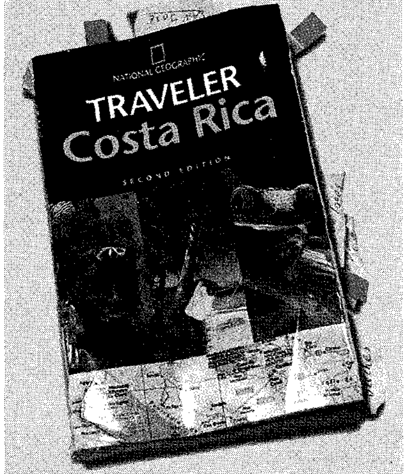

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POP MUSIC

UNBOUND

R. Kelly's latest album.

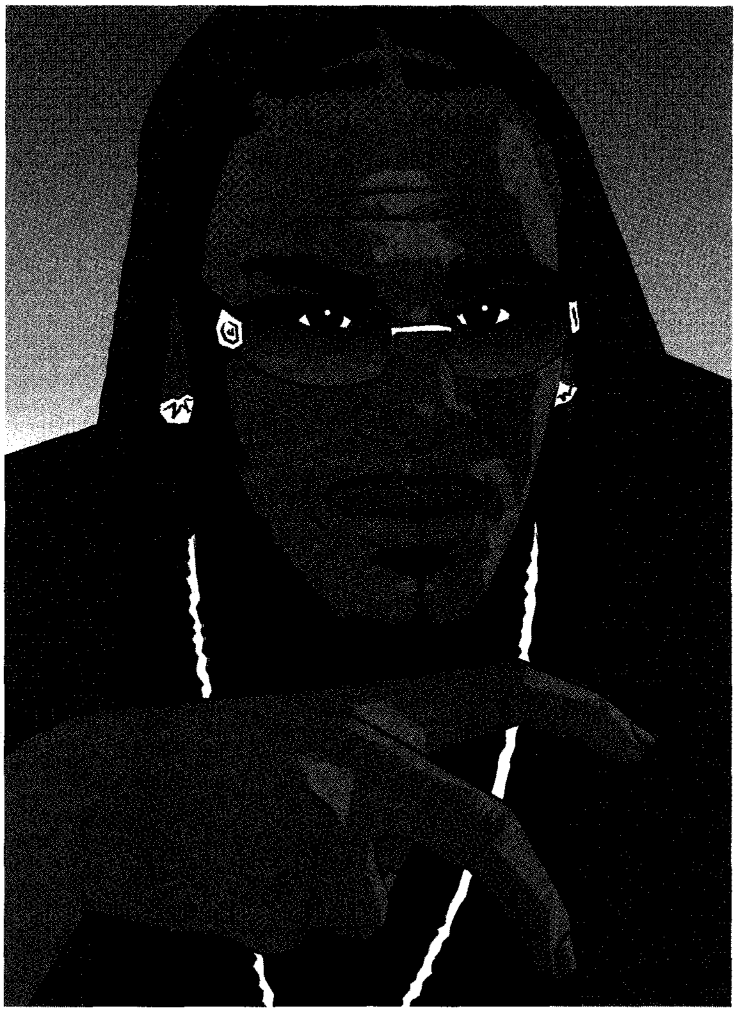
BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

In 2002, the R. & B. singer and songwriter R. Kelly was indicted on twenty-one counts of child pornography, after police in Chicago obtained a copy of a videotape showing a man, allegedly Kelly, having sex with a fourteen-year-old girl. Two years later, seven of the charges were dropped, but the case has yet to come to trial. Kelly, who has pleaded not guilty, has responded to his legal troubles by invoking God and, in a recent magazine interview, comparing himself to various black icons: “I'm the Ali of today. I'm the Marvin Gaye of today. I'm the Bob Marley of today. I'm the Martin Luther King, or all the other greats that have come before us. And a lot of people are starting to realize that now.”

Mostly, though, he has responded by working. Since 2002, Kelly has released songs and albums at a rate that eclipses even the productive pace he established in the nineteen-nineties. His new album, “Double Up”—his fourth in as many years—begins with “The Champ Is Here,” a chest-beating cry against the world's calumny and an appeal to his core constituency. The song is a pseudo-classical broth of strings, piano, and choir, like a soundtrack cue for Batman to save an imperilled power plant. As in many other R. Kelly songs, his vocals lie somewhere between singing and talking, a distinction that in African-American music is often fine enough to be invisible. He sounds wound up, slightly breathless, and aggrieved: “All y'all wanna pile on me, make it hard for me to breathe, throw sand in my eyes, and make it hard for me to see.” It isn't exactly an admission of guilt, though Kelly is clearly on the defensive. “I write music for the hood first, 'cause that's where I'm from, that's why the hood is always first, to help me overcome,” he says. The “hood” could be a reference to his Chicago neighborhood, or to the black community in general. Kelly has scored most of his hits on the hip-hop and R. & B. charts, and is comfortable working with rappers, but the audience for his best-known song, “I Believe I Can Fly,” an overblown ballad about triumph over adversity (and over zone defense), from the 1996 Michael Jordan film “Space Jam,” included millions of suburbanites and older Americans. The song will be played at graduations and sports events for the rest of time; it is likely to be Kelly's legacy.

After “The Champ Is Here” ends, Kelly, unaccompanied, makes a statement that we can probably take literally—“All right, now that we got that out the way, let's double up”—and launches into the title track. A modest guitar figure begins, accompanied by a supple beat that is equal parts thumping and clicking; Kelly favors a middle ground between the glimmer of R. & B. ballads and hip-hop's aggressive downbeat. The song is a heartfelt description of sleeping with two women, perhaps related, perhaps at the same time, and perhaps in the company of the rapper Snoop Dogg, who, in a guest appearance, points out that the encounter involves “forty toes.” The rest of the album is typical R. Kelly, as frustrating, perverse, and pleasurable as his best recordings. Kelly seems to have no superego; he is willing to say anything that occurs to him, no matter how strange he sounds or how self-incriminating it might seem. Many people facing serious criminal charges related to sexual conduct would not include a song called “Sex Planet” on their CD, or, if they did, would probably omit the line about a “trip to planet Uranus.”

Kelly's unpredictability may be his defining trait. On the one hand, he is an influential proponent of the elegant and largely chaste style of dancing known as “stepping,” which originated in Chicago and is usually performed in formal attire. On the other, his new album includes the song "Leave Your Name," which sounds at first like a standard slow jam: a sparse, gentle setting for his signature combination of conversation, sprechstimme, and lovely clumps of background vocals—when he plays congregation to his own preacher. But the story that the song recounts features neither pillow talk nor a stylish come-on. Kelly sings about being so "blasted off that Hennessy" that he fell asleep at a club and needed to be driven home, where he ended up "lying on the floor, snoring." The number is sung as an outgoing voice-mail message for all the women who will be calling him. ("Leave your name right after the beep and I'm sure to get back with you, if I'm not asleep, or smoking on some trees, or having a little sex.") Who wouldn't want to call an R. & B. star incapacitated by drink and under indictment?



R. Kelly's persona is off-putting, but his music is hard to resist.

QUICKHONEY

Kelly's persona is off-putting, but it is hard not to be taken by his talent. He can write compelling set pieces (an entire graduate seminar could be devoted to "Trapped in the Closet," a twelve-part, forty-minute suite about infidelity which includes a rogue cop and a midget) and artlessly horny but effective sex songs. ("Feelin' on Yo Booty" is one of my favorites.) He is best at gossamer-weight club songs. The key confection on "Double Up" is "I'm a Flirt (Remix)," which deftly turns on the fact that "I'm a flirt" can mean either "I am a flirtatious person" or "I'm going to flirt right now." A hit since it was released, in February, "I'm a Flirt" balances the weather system that is Kelly's libido with his gift for vocal flourishes. Kelly's lyrics aren't so impressive—"A dog on the prowl when I'm walking through the mall. If I could, man, I probably would flirt with all of y'all"—but his delivery is rhythmically articulate and harmonically rich. Random words are isolated, harmonized, and sent in unexpected directions: the phrase "through the mall" floats up briefly into falsetto; the words "girlfriend" and "cousin" are sung in half time as Kelly dodges and lurches, warning those around him of his powers of attraction. ("Homey, don't bring your girl to meet me, 'cause I'm a flirt, and baby don't bring your girlfriend to eat, 'cause I'm a flirt.") In a move that is either sheer gall or evidence that Kelly may not be aware of the gravity of his legal situation, he begins one verse with the words "I swear to tell the truth and the whole truth."

Nevertheless, for all the songs on the album that take place in an improbable world of clubs and enormous cars, where Kelly's most arduous task is persuading a woman to give him her phone number, there are an equal number of songs rooted in a merciless reality. "Real Talk," one of many songs in Kelly's catalogue that involve an impassioned phone conversation, features his side of a lovers' spat. Sounding both vulnerable and angry, and a little like the seventies soul star Bobby Womack, Kelly switches between pleading, yelling, and talking as he counters his lover's accusation that her friend saw him at a club with another woman. "Did she say there were other guys there?" he hollers repeatedly, as quiet strings and the clicks of a drum machine fall silent. "How the fuck she know I was with them other girls, then?" The argument escalates, as Kelly tallies what he has spent on his girlfriend's hair and nails, eventually dismissing her as "bogus," encouraging her to burn his clothes, and calling for his driver, Milton. In an age of overmanaged stars, who won't deviate from talking points, Kelly is an anomaly.

"Best Friend" is as good an example as we have of his complexity. Kelly, apparently in prison, greets his girlfriend, Sheila, whose part is sung by Keyshia Cole, an R. & B. up-and-comer, and his friend Charles, played by the producer Polow da Don. Kelly complains, "These fools about to make me lose my mind, I don't think I can do all this time." He asks Charles to bring him some Charmin ("this toilet paper be cuttin' my ass"); Sheila sings a note from Kelly's children—"Roses are red, violets are blue, Daddy we love you, and we miss you, too." Then Kelly accuses Sheila of sleeping with Charles, because he "is wearing the shirt you bought me." Kelly admits that he may be imagining things: "Well, maybe I'm just a little paranoid. Can you blame me? Just look at her, she's pretty as all outdoors." Charles and Sheila announce that they are thinking of forming a rap duo, and Kelly erupts in jealousy, eventually stopping the music in order to restrain himself from cursing. Why would he censor himself, especially on an album otherwise so uninhibited? God only knows. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

DO NO HARM

"Sicko" and "Evening."

BY DAVID DENBY

Michael Moore has teased and bullied his way to some brilliant highs in his career as a political entertainer, but he scrapes bottom in his new documentary, "Sicko." The movie is an attack on the American health-care system, and it starts out strongly, with Moore interviewing families who have been betrayed or neglected by H.M.O.s and insurance companies. A man whose life might have been saved by a bone-marrow transplant died when he was refused "experimental" treatment. A feverish baby died when her mother, rather than taking her to a hospital run by her insurer, Kaiser Permanente, rushed her to the nearest emergency room, where they were turned away. Moore then zeroes in on the situation of three volunteer Ground Zero rescue workers, who have trouble breathing or who suffer from stress and can't get assistance from the federal government. More baffled than angry, they soberly report on their conditions, and Moore comments that even national heroes aren't given help by the nation. A bit later in the film, however, he presents congressional testimony suggesting that people the Administration has deemed to be national enemies—the detainees at Guantánamo Bay—are receiving good health care free. So Moore loads the Ground Zero volunteers, plus some other people who have serious health problems, into three boats in the Miami harbor. "Which way to Guantánamo Bay?" he calls out to a Coast Guard vessel, and the little flotilla sets off for Cuba. When the boats arrive outside the base, they are, of course, stonily denied entrance.

An absurdist of outrage, Moore has attacked corporations that destroy cities by closing down local plants ("Roger & Me"); a gun-happy culture that makes arms easily available ("Bowling for Columbine"); an Administration that begins a war without sufficient cause ("Fahrenheit 9/11"). He has stalked corporate officials and congressmen, planted his bulk before them and asked mock-naïve questions, and his provocations, at their best, have smoked out hypocrites and liars. But this confrontation is different. Hauling off seriously ill people to a military base where they won't receive treatment is a dumb prank. And the insensitivity isn't much relieved by the piece of whimsy that comes next: Moore and the rescue workers (the other sick voyagers having mysteriously disappeared) wander onto the streets of Havana and ask some guys playing dominoes if there's a doctor nearby. They go to a pharmacy and then to a hospital, where the Americans are admitted and treated. Few people in Moore's audience are likely to be displeased that they receive help from a Communist system. But what is the point of Moore's fiction of a desperate, wandering quest for medicine on the streets, as if he hadn't known in advance that Cuba has free health care? Why not tell us what really happened on the trip—for instance, what part Cuban officials played in receiving the American patients?

Michael Moore's documentary is an attack on the American health-care system.

PHILIP BURKE

After the early tales of the system's failure, "Sicko" becomes feeble, even inane. A recent poll shows that a majority of Americans not only favor a national health service but are willing to pay higher taxes for it. In that case, wouldn't it have made sense for Moore to find out what features of universal care in other countries could be adapted to America? Instead of sorting through any of this, Moore and his crew go from place to place—to Canada, England, and France, as well as Cuba—and, at every stop, he pulls the same silly stunt of pretending to be astonished that health care is free. How much do people pay here in France? Nothing? You've got to be kidding. But isn't everyone taxed to death to pay for health care? Well, here's a nice, two-income French couple who have a great apartment and collect sand from the deserts of the world. Not only haven't they been impoverished by taxation; they *travel*. And so on.

In each country, Moore interviews doctors who speak proudly of how well their country's system works. But the candor of these doctors is no more impressive than that of the corporate spokesmen Moore has confronted in the past. No one mentions the delays or the instances of less than first-rate care. We find out that a doctor in Great Britain makes a good income (about two hundred thousand dollars), but not how medical care in, say, Toronto might differ from that in a distant rural area, or how shortages may have affected the quality of Cuban health care. Moore winds up treating the audience the same way that, he says, powerful people treat the weak in America—as dopes easily satisfied with fairy tales and bland reassurances. And since he doesn't interview any of the countless Americans who have been mulling over ways to reform our system, we're supposed to come away from "Sicko" believing that sane thinking on these issues is unknown here. In the actual political world, the major Democratic Presidential candidates have already offered, or will soon offer, plans for reform. A shift to the left, or, at least, to the center, has overtaken Michael Moore, yielding an irony more striking than any he turns up: the changes in political consciousness that Moore himself has helped produce have rendered his latest film almost superfluous.

In "Evening," based on Susan Minot's celebrated 1998 novel, an elderly woman, Ann Lord (Vanessa Redgrave), lies dying, attended by her two daughters (Natasha Richardson and Toni Collette) and by memories of a painful and ecstatic weekend decades before. In the early fifties, at the Newport wedding of her best friend (Mamie Gummer), she divided her time between two young men—her friend's ranting alcoholic brother (Hugh Dancy) and a handsome young doctor (Patrick Wilson), with whom she fell in love. The elderly Ann drifts in and out of memory and delirium, and the director, Lajos Koltai, aided by a screenplay written by Minot and the novelist Michael Cunningham, has concocted a remarkably complicated structure that alternates past and present, fantasy and reality. It is perhaps unnecessary to say that Vanessa Redgrave, flat on her back, makes lucid poetry and vivid emotion out of the most fragmentary and evanescent feelings. I can pay Redgrave no higher compliment than to say that if I have to watch an actor expire for two hours I would rather it be her than anyone else. Meryl Streep, as the long-ago bride now grown old, has a fine moment, too, as she lies in bed with Redgrave, and the two women look at the past, compare marriages, and make an accounting of their "mistakes"—which turn out to be merely life as it is lived, rather than as it is hoped for. As the young Ann, Claire Danes, with her broad shoulders and broad smile, has a forceful way about her that makes one want to see more.

Watching these performances, however, is about the only pleasure I got from "Evening." This is one of the rare movies that are too sensitive for their own good. In the course of it, in both the past and the present, all the characters have to spill their feelings about everyone else, and the pileup of hurt, rue, and guilt—confessions and reconciliations and partings—becomes oppressive. The structure that the filmmakers have created is too complicated and fussy for their fairly simple story and what it has to say about time and memory, and some of Koltai's directorial touches, such as a scene in which Redgrave imagines herself chasing little white moths in her bedclothes, turn poetry into kitsch.

Minot's prose, which is dreamy and taut at the same time, has a distinctive rhythm that probably can't be transferred to film. In truth, this sort of mood-memory material would have been done better fifty years ago, when it would have starred Lana Turner, Rock Hudson, Sandra Dee, and John Gavin, and been directed by Douglas Sirk. The resulting movie—let's call it "There's Always Yesterday"—would have been obvious and floridly emotional, but it would have had greater energy and theatrical flair than "Evening," which isn't much fun. The current crop of players is far more talented than my 1957 cast, but refined acting can be a trap. As everyone's love object, Patrick Wilson is given little to do but stand around and look good. He was very effective as the dumb male dish in "Little Children," but, if he doesn't find some assertive roles to play, he's in danger of turning into a joke. American movies desperately need a young leading man. He's my candidate. ♦

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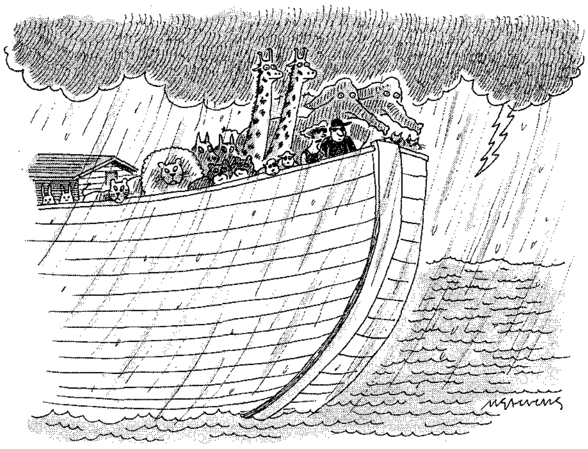
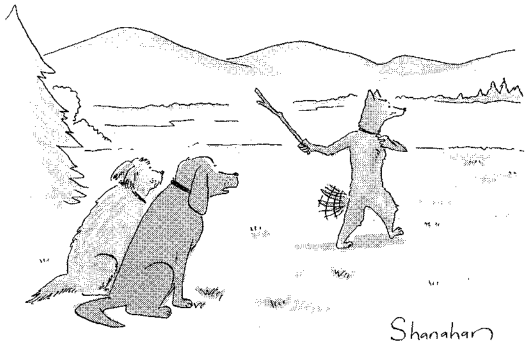
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Frank Cotham, must be received by Sunday, July 1st. Finalists in the June 11th & 18th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the July 23rd issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"Don't tell Noah about the vasectomy."
David Kempler, Island Park, N.Y.



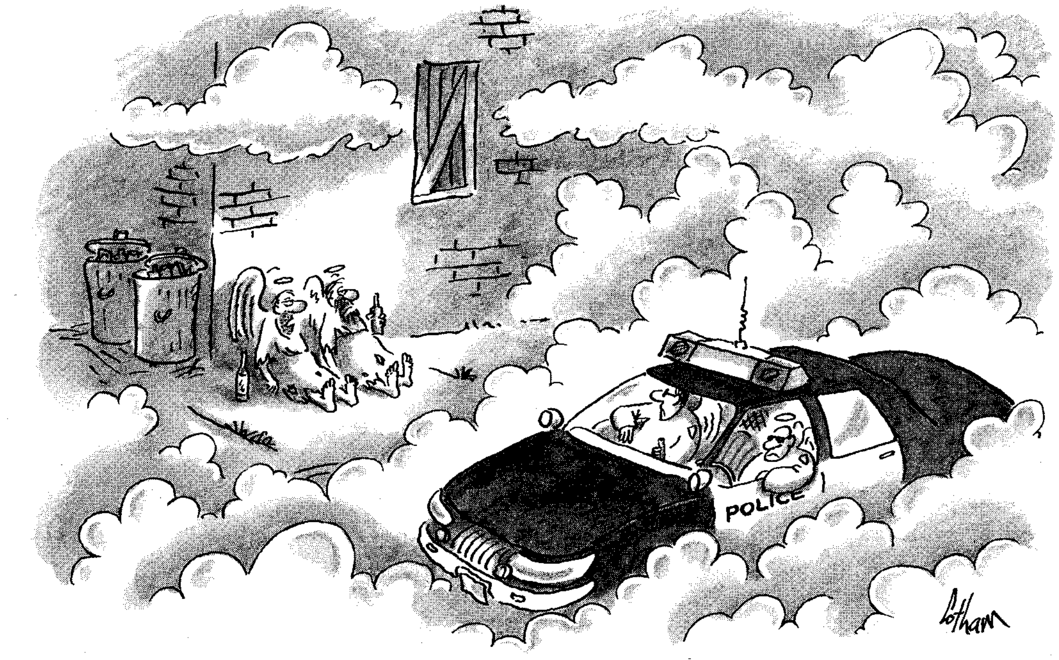
THE FINALISTS

"He's his own best friend."
Jennifer Iverson, Santa Ynez, Calif.

"In order to truly master the art of fetch, you must understand every element of the process."
Daniel Kennelly, Chicago, Ill.

"He identifies with the oppressor."
Ross Firestone, New York City

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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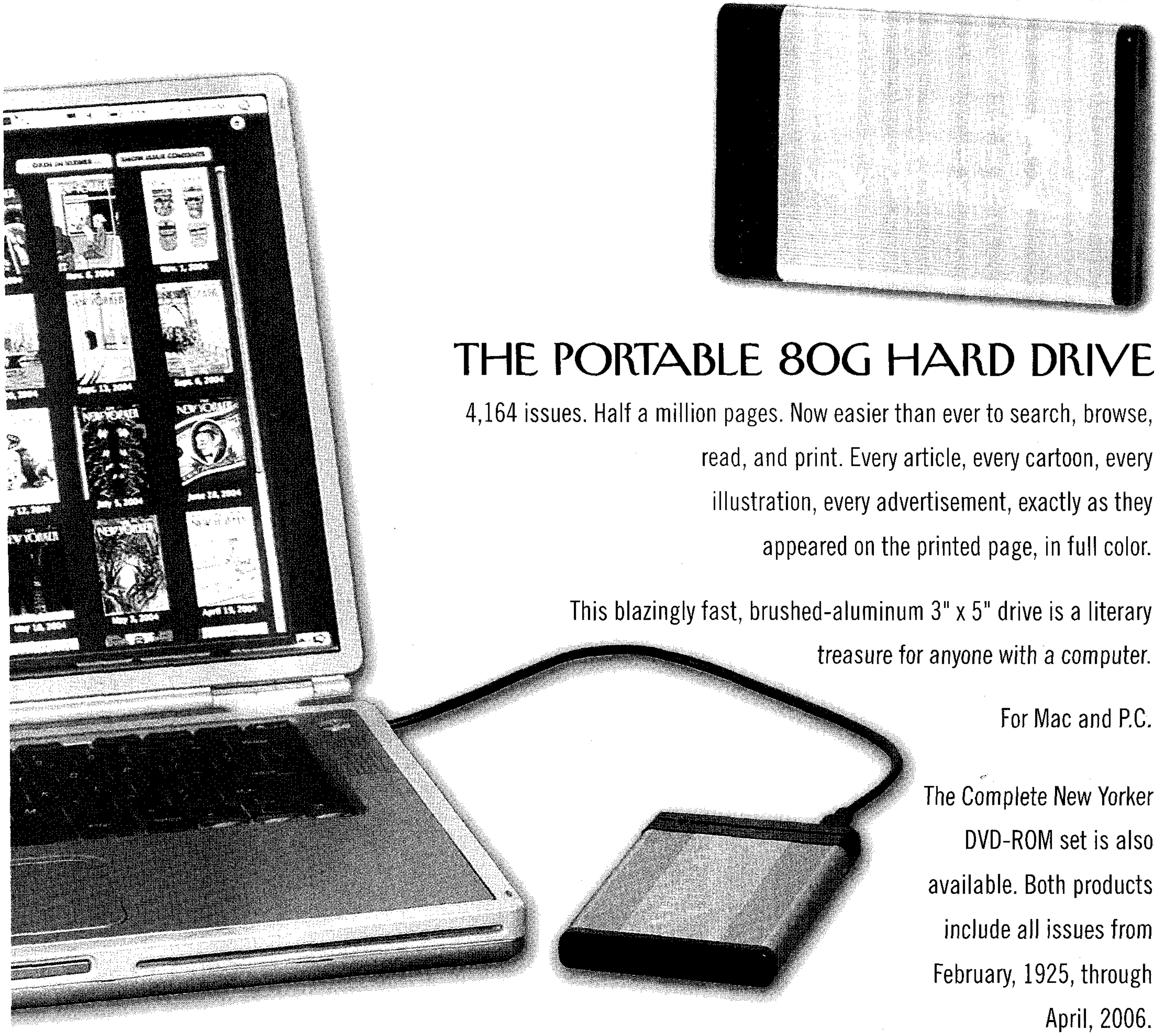

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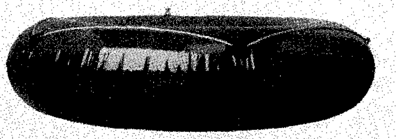
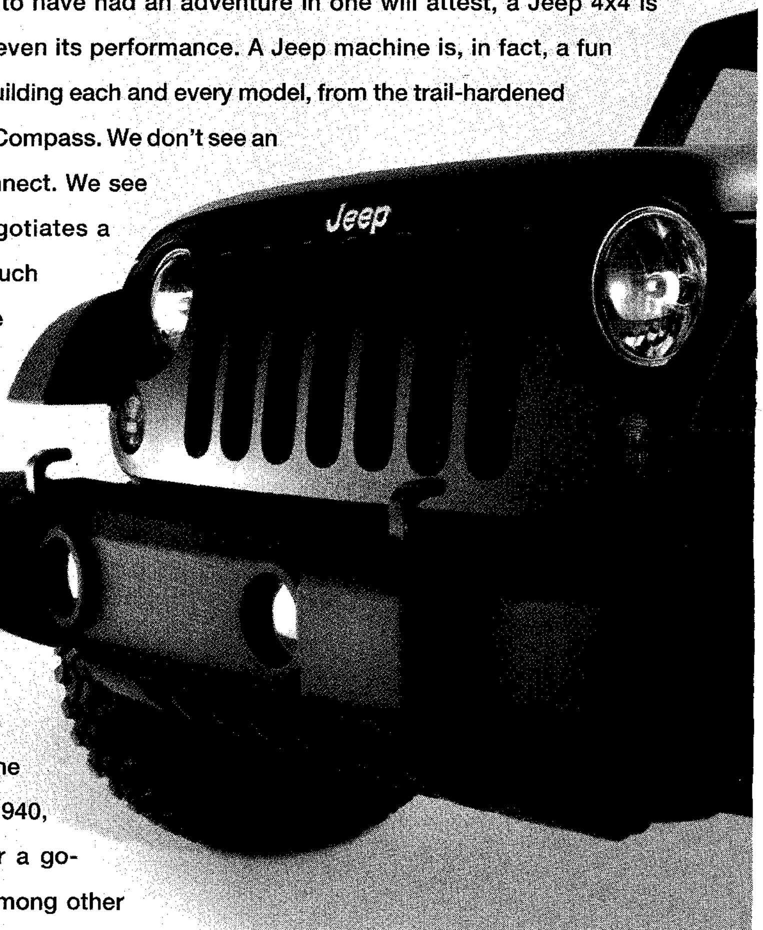


That's right, Toledo, Ohio. That's where the original Jeep® brand vehicles were manufactured, just as thousands are today. And as anyone lucky enough to have had an adventure in one will attest, a Jeep 4x4 is much more than the sum of its parts, or even its performance. A Jeep machine is, in fact, a fun machine. That's the approach we take to building each and every model, from the trail-hardened Wrangler Rubicon to the new street-smart Compass. We don't see an available electronic front sway bar disconnect. We see the passengers' eyes widening as it negotiates a series of rhino-sized boulders. It's not so much a sealed central venting system, it's the sound of giddy, uncontrolled laughter as the mud splashes against the windshield. Naturally, a 95.4-inch wheelbase is the footprint of fun. And of course the sheer unapologetic joys of an available 458-watt, nine-speaker sound system are self-evident. Funny thing is, it didn't start out this way. No sir – or more appropriately, make that, "Yes, sir, Mr. Chief of Infantry of the Quartermaster Corps, sir!" The year was 1940, and the call went out from the Army for a go-anywhere reconnaissance vehicle with, among other specs, a driving front axle with 2-speed transfer case (including provisions for disengaging the front axle drive), a body of rectangular design with a folding windshield and 3 bucket seats, means for towing, a wheelbase of 80," and approach and departure angles of 45 and 40 degrees respectively (sound familiar?). In any case, plans were drawn up, designs were approved and prototypes were built and tested. And tested, and tested, and tested. The resulting vehicle was a milestone of modern engineering. It arguably helped us prevail in two theaters, and its DNA is



and manufactured in Ohio.

very evident in the Jeep vehicles we still proudly roll out today. For this basic design to have thrived for so many years is a tribute to its designers. Clearly, these guys knew what they were doing in crafting the perfect utility workhorse. What they didn't realize is that they were also inventing the utility of fun, and that for every Jeep vehicle that proudly served, thousands more would go on to serve in the noble pursuit of – you guessed it – fun. As the years have passed, we've learned that different kinds of fun require different kinds of equipment. One person's fun involves heavy-duty steel rock rails and a winch, while another's might call for water- and stain-shedding interior fabric. One person's floorboard drain plugs are another person's swing-down liftgate speakers. And heaven knows we've had fun with various paint packages over the decades (just visit the history section at Jeep.com and you'll see a little bit of everything). But one thing will always remain constant, and that is the core purpose and intent of a Jeep vehicle – to be, from the ground up, a dirt throwing, creek-splashing, snow-gripping, hill-defying, pothole-shrugging, road-embracing, pink inner-tube toting, story-collecting fun machine. There's one waiting for you right now, its headlights gazing out on either side of a trademark seven-slot grille, just waiting to play. All it wants is for someone like you to show up, climb in and turn the key. Jeep.com

Have fun out there. Jeep®

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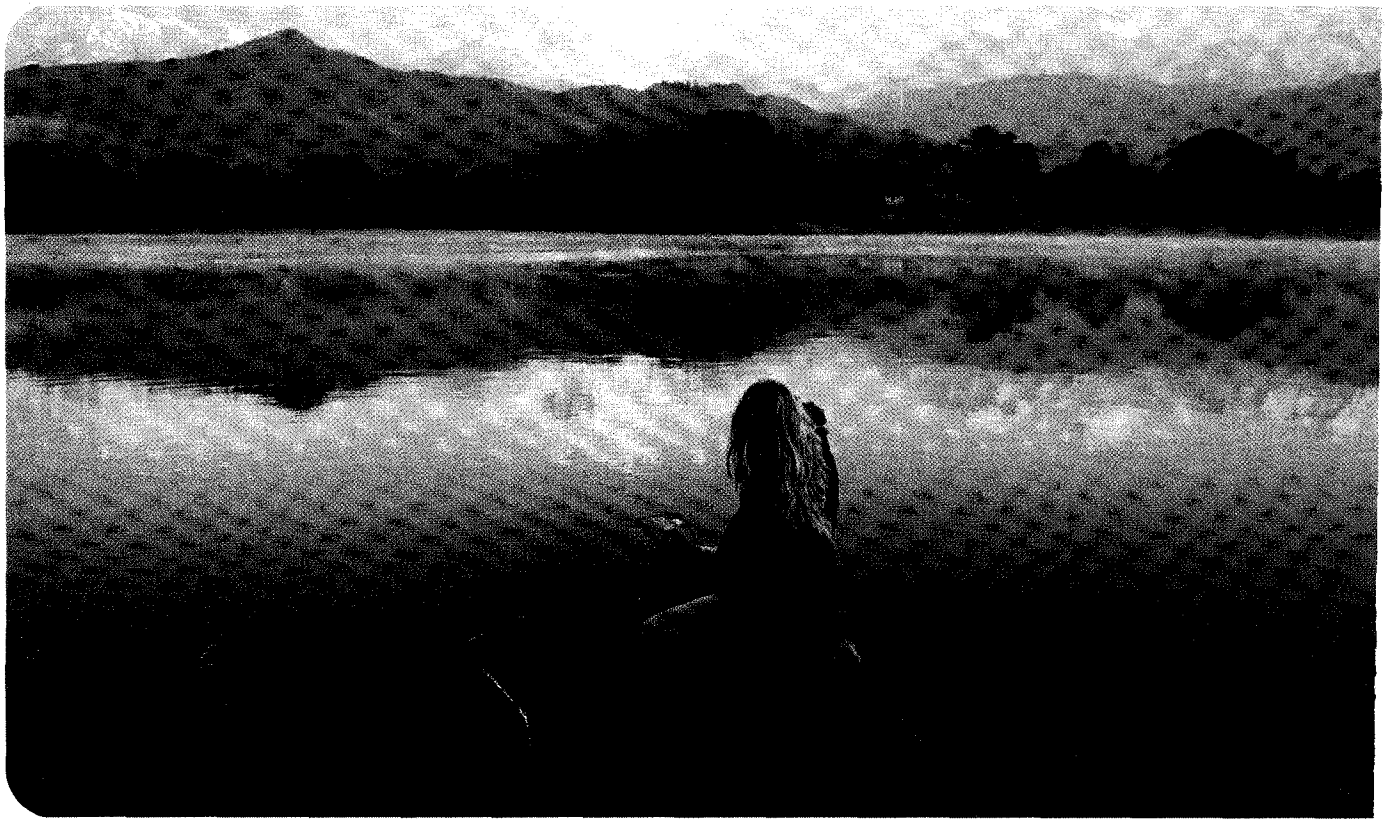
would end up being so relaxing?



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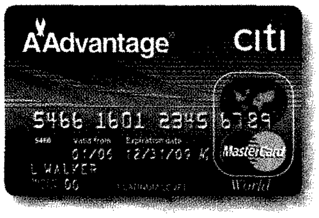

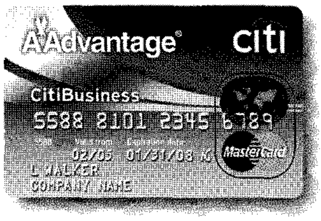

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